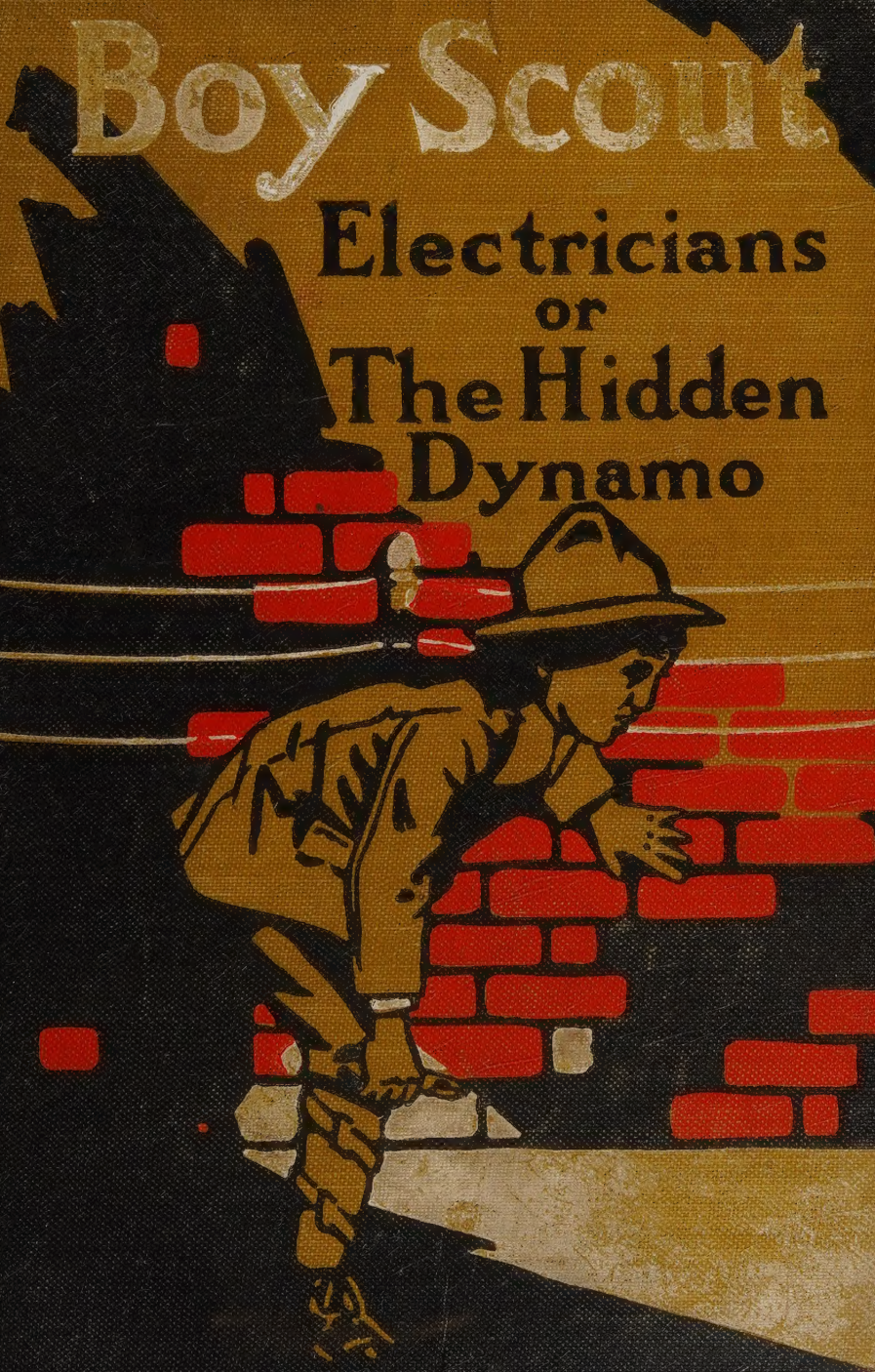
Boy Scout Electricians or The Hidden Dynamo



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The
Boy Scout Electricians
Or
The Hidden Dynamo

BY

Scout Master G. Harvey Ralphson

Chicago
M. A. Donohue & Company

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Chicago

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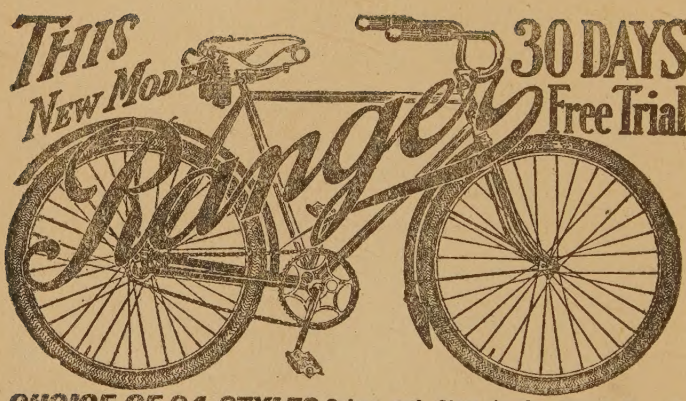

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The Boy Scout Electricians

or

The Hidden Dynamo

CHAPTER I

A FAKE TELEGRAM

"The Boy Scout Electricians! That sounds scientific."

Jimmie McGraw, sitting in a window of the Black Bear Patrol clubroom in the city of New York, on a night in early June, ran his fingers through a mop of red hair and tried to look dignified and important.

"It sounds all right," admitted Frank Shaw, "but where does the scientific knowledge come in? Whose idea is it, anyway?"

"You've come to the right shop for information," Jimmie replied. "We're going up against a band of train robbers!"

"I like that!" Frank exclaimed.

"Well," Jimmie went on, "you don't have to go if you don't want to; but Ned Nestor is going and I'm going with him."

"After train robbers?" questioned Frank. "We'll make a hit catching train robbers after a lot of Federal Secret Service men have fallen

down on the job—I don't think. Who pushed the button for this new stunt, anyway?"

"That's what I'm telling you," Jimmie replied. "You see," he went on, "there's a new railroad building out in the Crazy mountain country, and the stand-and-deliver people have formed a habit of annexing the cash in the pay car. That's what we're going out to see about."

"I have read about the robberies near Crazy mountain," Frank said, "and they seem to me to have been pulled off by experts."

"That's the general idea," Jimmie replied.

"But why do they think a bunch of Boy Scouts can go out to the wild and wooly west and capture a desperate bunch like that?"

"That's just it," Jimmie answered. "The Secret Service department at Washington has employed Ned Nestor on the case just because we are a bunch of boys. We're to go out there and camp out, and hunt, and fish, and have all the fun we can, and still keep an eye out for the mountain brigands. The idea of the Secret Service chief is that no one will pay any attention to us boys, and that we can do more towards solving the robbery mysteries than expert operators sent from Washington have been able to accomplish."

"But what's this talk about the Electrical Club?" asked Frank, still puzzled.

"That's another reason for sending us out," Jimmie answered. "Ned Nestor and Harry Stevens are both fine amateur electricians, and we're going out to practice some new-method electrical stunts in the neighborhood of Crazy mountain, Montana."

"The last time we went out," laughed Frank, "we went as a Camera club."

"And we got what we went after, didn't we?" Jimmie asked.

"All right!" Frank said. "But I don't understand it, just the same."

"Besides robbing the pay car," Jimmie went on, "the brigands are pulling off stunts that amount almost to magic. The railroad people believe they are in some way using electricity in the securing of information."

"Well, why don't they go and find their wires?" asked Frank.

"Because they don't seem to have any wires," replied Jimmie. "The general manager believes that they must have monster dynamos hidden in the mountains, and also that they are experts in the use of the wireless."

"And, taking the whole thing together," Frank laughed, "don't you think it is a big stunt to put a company of Boy Scouts up against?"

"Well," laughed Jimmie whimsically, "that's a wild country, and two Black Bears and two

Wolves ought to manage to work their way through the mountains without attracting very much attention."

"I'm game for it!" Frank said.

"You know," Jimmie suggested, "you can amuse yourself sending in several columns a day to your father's newspaper."

"Of course!" Frank exclaimed. "I didn't think of that."

"How much copy did you send in on the West Virginia trip?" asked Jimmie with a grin. "Have they put it in book form yet?"

"Well, you know," answered Frank hesitatingly, "we were away up in the mountains, and I couldn't get out to the post office, and so I only sent in five letters and one postal card."

"I remember," Jimmie chuckled, "the five long letters contained requests for more money, and the postal card carried the news item."

"I'm going to do better this trip," Frank insisted. "You wait until we get into the mountains, and I'll show you the kind of copy I can furnish."

The clubroom of the Black Bear Patrol, Boy Scouts of America, is situated in the handsome residence of the father of one of the members, Jack Bosworth, on a fashionable street west of Central Park. It occupies almost the entire fourth floor of the large building. In this room,

the boys had planned expeditions to Mexico, the Canal Zone, the Philippines, China, and the Great Northwest.

All these trips had been led by Nestor, a member of the Wolf Patrol. Some months before, after executing successfully a diplomatic mission to the Canal Zone, Ned had been employed by the Secret Service department at Washington to look into numerous puzzling cases.

On the theory, as stated by Jimmie McGraw, also of the Wolf Patrol, that a band of Boy Scouts would be able to work successfully where expert operators might fail, the department had given Nestor some rather important diplomatic missions. On the return of the boys from Lady Franklin Bay, which is far to the north of the Arctic Circle, it had been suggested that they undertake to unravel the numerous daring train robberies in the Crazy mountain district.

Ned and Jimmie had talked the matter over thoroughly with Harry Stevens, Frank Shaw having been away on a vacation. It had been decided that only four of the Boy Scouts should go on this trip to the mountains, and Frank had been selected as the fourth member. It had fallen to Jimmie's lot to inform him of his selection.

"I'm strong for this job!" Frank said after further discussion. "We'll have a glorious time in the hills. Why don't you take Jack Bosworth along, too?"

"Because only four can go," was the reply.

"Only four!" repeated Frank. "I guess there's plenty of railroads leading out to the wooly west."

"That's all right," Jimmie explained, "but we're taking a modern, high-power motor car with us, and there's seats for only five in it. We'll have to pick up a lot of equipment, and probably a guide, or one of the railway officials, and that will account for all the space after our equipment is packed in."

"What kind of equipment?" asked Frank.

"Electrical equipment, of course. I don't know exactly what, but Ned has it packed in suit cases, and oblong boxes, and coils, and packages of all kinds. The big car, you see, will seat seven, or would seat seven if the seats were all in, but one section has been constructed on purpose for the equipment."

"Are we going to ride to the mountains in the motor car?" asked Frank.

"I should say not," was the reply. "We're going to put the motor car in a special coach provided for the purpose, and ride out on the

cushions. When we get into the hill country, we're going to unload."

Frank threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

"And then," he said, still laughing, "I suppose we're going to carry in a lot of derricks to help us get the machine up the hills. You can't run a motor car in that country, and you ought to know it. What's the good of taking a car, anyway?"

"Principally to carry the electrical equipment," was the answer. "Why, we've got a dynamo on our machine that will supply enough electricity to light a town."

"You say it will!" laughed Frank. "I suppose you've got a dynamo that will supply a current for wireless, too."

"That's just what we have!" replied Jimmie. "Say," he went on, wrinkling a turned-up nose, "why do you think we're calling this aggregation of talent The Boy Scout Electricians. If there's anything new in electrical appliances that Ned hasn't got, he'll get it before we start out."

"I'm glad of it," Frank replied. "I hope he'll have an electrical appliance that'll cook and wash dishes."

"He has!" shouted Jimmie, "he has! He's got a coil that'll cook a beefsteak while you wait,

and make coffee in two minutes You'll see when the machine's ready what kind of a carriage you're going to live in."

"And what are you going to call this machine?" asked Frank. "It will virtually be a power house in the mountains, but we may as well call it an automobile."

"We're going to name it The Boy Scout," was the reply, "but, of course, it will always be called Scout for short. Ned will be up here directly and tell you all about it. He ought to have been here long ago."

At that moment the door of the club room opened and Jack Bosworth entered, carrying a yellow telegraph envelope in his hand.

"Here's a message for Ned," he said, "but Ned isn't here, and I move that we open it. It is undoubtedly something connected with the western trip you boys are going to have."

"Sure, open it!" cried Jimmie.

Jack tore open the envelope and drew out the message.

" 'Trouble at the factory.' " he read, "'Get down here quick, and bring the boys with you.' "

"It is signed 'Harry Stevens'," Jack explained. "What ought we to do about it?"

"We ought to leave the telegram here for Ned to read when he comes," Frank suggested, "and go down to the factory."

"Well, come on, then," Jimmie advised. "If there's anything wrong at the factory which concerns us, it means that the Scout has been tampered with."

"Of course, that's what it means," Jack Bosworth declared. "If the newspapers hadn't printed a long screed about this new automobile, and the trip the Boy Scout Electricians are going to take in it, there wouldn't have been any trouble with the machine."

"Groucho!" shouted Jimmie. "How would anyone know from reading the articles that we were going west to pick a crop of train robbers?"

"Don't you ever think that the crooks don't know what Ned Nestor is up to!" commented Jack. "If those fellows out west are doing their work with the aid of electricity, they doubtless know about the organization of the Boy Scout Electricians. They always have spies in the cities, and the story of that automobile power house would be sent to them as soon as it came off the press."

"I half believe you are right," Frank said, "and I wish I hadn't told Dad anything about it. Still," he continued, "it isn't all my fault. You boys told me quite a lot about the wonderful machine Harry's father was building, but you never told me what use it was going to be

put to. If you had, I never would have said a word about it."

"Well, well!" Jimmie said, "don't let's stand around here making apologies! Let's go to the factory and see what's going on!"

The three boys hastened out to the street to find an automobile waiting there.

"Jump in, kids!" the chauffeur said, "Mr. Bosworth said you'd be out in a short time, and you'd want to ride."

"Just the thing!" cried Jack.

The boys entered the machine and were driven swiftly away toward a North river pier. Directly, Frank turned to Jack and asked:

"Say, why didn't we telephone to the factory before we started?"

"Search me," Jack answered. "I'll stop the machine and go and do it right now."

The motor car came to a halt in front of a rather gaudy eating house on Sixth avenue, and the boys all got out. While Jack went into the telephone booth, Frank and Jimmie seated themselves at a table and ordered sandwiches and coffee. Jack came back presently, evidently laboring under strong excitement.

"Look here, boys," he said, "there's some mistake about this! There's nothing wrong at the factory."

"Who did you talk with?" asked Jimmie.

"The night watchman," was the reply. "He happened to be on the finishing floor when I called up. He heard the bell ringing in the office and replied at once. There is nothing unusual going on there. Now, what do you think this message means?"

"Something crooked!" Frank replied. "You boys remain here and I'll go and telephone to Harry Stevens. It is only eight o'clock, and he may be at home. If he isn't, I'll call up the clubroom. He may be there by this time."

Frank returned in a moment to report that Harry was at home and also that he had sent no telegram that night.

"We're starting in well," laughed Jimmie. "What do you think we ought to do? There's mystery in the air—as usual!"

"I don't think we'll have to do anything," Jack said in a moment. "Don't you remember seeing a shut-up little runabout almost in front of the house when we left. Well, when I came out of the booth, I naturally glanced through the crowd out of the door, and that runabout was out there in front. I reckon we've been followed here. They think Ned is with the party."

"You're the little boy prophet of evil, all right!" laughed Jimmie. "Why, there's a thousand shut-in runabout cars in New York tonight, and they all look just alike!"

CHAPTER II

A CLASH WITH THE POLICE

"They don't all look like this one," Jack said positively. "I'll tell you right now that the runabout we saw in front of father's house was out there in front of the restaurant when I came away from the booth. Just look around the place, and see if you can detect anyone paying special attention to this table."

The boys ate their sandwiches and drank their coffee, laughing and talking, and peering carelessly around the restaurant.

"I've found him!" Jimmie said directly, bending over his coffee and speaking in a low tone. "Now don't look up and rubber when I tell you where he sits. Just keep right on eating and drinking."

"I've got him, too!" Frank said. "First row of tables to the right—third one from the door. Isn't that right, Jimmie?"

"Right you are!" answered the boy. "The slim fellow in the blue serge suit, light tie, with a diamond half as big as a pint cup."

"That's the man, and I'll tell you what I'm going to do," Jack said. "I'm going to telephone to the clubroom. Ned may be there by

this time, and if he is we'll get him down here."

"That's right!" Jimmie agreed, "whoever the fellow is, he is after Ned. He probably doesn't know anything about us."

"Of course he's found out something about the Scout being fitted out for work in the west, and if we let him get his information to his principals, it will be a fight all the way out there, and a scrap on the ground every minute!" suggested Jack.

"Then we've got to catch him before he communicates with the chief robber," Frank declared. "You go on and call up the clubroom and see if you can get Ned on the wire."

Jack returned fron the booth in a short time and reported that Ned was at the clubroom, worrying over the despatch.

"Did you tell him to come down here immediately?" asked Frank.

"Sure I did," replied the boy. "What do you suppose I went to the 'phone for?"

"Now, when Ned comes," Jimmie suggested, "I'll watch that fellow in the blue serge suit, and you boys look the other way. It won't do for all of us to be rubbering at him."

"That's right!" Frank commented. "We ought to be able to tell by his actions when Ned enters whether he's anxious to see him or not."

And so the boys set their trap for the man

whom they believed to be a spy and waited impatiently for results. In ten minutes Ned came in, glanced casually about the large room and advanced to the table where the three boys sat. "Did you see the despatch?" asked Jimmie in a tone loud enough to be heard by the man at the other table.

"Don't shout!" Frank advised, "he'll hear you."

"Jimmie is right," said Ned speaking in an undertone, "Go on, boy."

"Because if you didn't," Jimmy said, speaking loudly again, "we can tell you about it. There's something wrong at the factory and we've got to go there."

"All right!" Ned said cheerfully, "it is probably nothing serious, so we'll send the machine back home and take a walk in that direction."

"That's the ticket!" Frank exclaimed. "I've been in the house all day and this is a right fine night for a walk."

As the boy spoke, he nudged Ned under the table and said in a low tone:

"We caught on that time. Did you notice the grin on the fellow's face? He thinks he's got us now, all right."

"He must be new," chuckled Jack. "I guess he never had much experience with Boy Scouts."

"Well," Ned said, rising and speaking in a

loud tone, "I'll go and send the machine back, and you fellows come on out as soon as you finish your lunch. If this foxy old boy at the next table is a spy, as we believe he is, he'll follow me out to the street," he added in a low tone of voice.

The boy left the table and walked slowly to the entrance. The boys leaned back in their chairs and watched him. The man in the blue serge suit arose in a minute and followed.

"We've got him!" Jimmie whispered. "You pay the check when we pass the cashier," he continued, speaking to Frank, "and Jack and I will go on out to help Ned if he needs us."

When they reached the pavement Ned stood talking with the chauffeur, and the man in the blue serge suit stood not far away looking into the display window of a tobacco shop.

"He's the cute little sleuth, that fellow!" Jimmie chuckled. "Now you, Frank and Jack, walk along with Ned and I'll trail along behind to see if this foxy boy picks up any confederates."

This plan was followed. As the boys swung down the street, laughing and talking, the suspect strolled on after them, keeping only a few paces in their rear, as Sixth avenue at that time on a June night is a pretty busy place. Jimmie kept close behind his quarry, and so walking they presently came to a dark and well-nigh deserted street leading to the North river.

Up to this time, the man in the blue serge suit had walked alone, but here at a particularly dark corner, he was joined by a rough-looking man who stepped out of a saloon door and without speaking a word, fell into step with him.

"There's two of them, all right," Jimmie mused. "Now I wish Ned would do something to make sure that we are not mistaken."

The next moment exactly the thing the boy was wishing for took place. Ned and his companions entered a dim little cigar store and stopped at the front show case to examine a collection of pipes. The two men who had been following them stepped into the first stairway to the east and waited. When the boys came out of the cigar store, the two moved on again.

"It is a sure thing now," Jimmie mused, "and I suppose Ned knows it just as well as I do."

But if Ned and his companions had any idea that they were being followed, they gave no notification of the fact. They walked slowly on, laughing and talking, until they came to the dark front of an old warehouse which stood not far from a Hudson river pier. There they paused and engaged in a conversation perfectly audible to Jimmie. As the two suspects were between Ned and Jimmie, they also must have heard what was being said.

"I don't believe there's any use of our going away down to the factory, Jack was heard to say. "If there is anything wrong there, it is only a little matter of detail, and Ned can attend to it just as well alone."

"Oh, come on down, boys," Ned cut in. "You may as well go just for company."

"I've got a date over on the avenue," Frank exclaimed, "and Jack and I will meet you up at Carter's place when you come back from the factory."

"All right," Ned said. "I'll be there within an hour at the latest."

Jimmie snickered as the two boys turned back, walked directly past the two suspects, and stopped on a corner near by.

"What did you do that for?" Jimmie asked as they came up to him. "What do you want to leave Ned alone for?"

"We want to give them a good chance to attack him," Jack explained. "You see," he continued, "we've got to know right now what they're up to."

"Ned thinks they haven't communicated with their principals yet, but will do so tonight after they get him out of the way," Frank went on. "You see," he continued, "we mustn't let a word of what's going on here get out to the men we're going after. If they find out all about the

Scout being fitted out for their especial benefit, we may as well not go at all."

"I see!" Jimmie answered. "And now we'd better keep within reach."

Five minutes later, Ned was not at all surprised to have two men, who had started to pass him, turn back and attempt to throw him to the ground. As the reader understands, he had been expecting just this movement. The two men who formed the attacking party, however, were very much surprised to find themselves instantly in the hands of three lusty young fellows who tipped them over on the hard pavement and sat down on them. The man in the blue serge suit fought desperately for a while, but was finally quieted by a couple of vigorous blows. His companion only grunted and groaned dismally. He had received a bad wound on the head when he fell.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded the man who had been in the restaurant.

"This is just a joke!" Jimmie grinned. "We're out tipping people over for the fun of the thing. We started out tipping over cigar store Indians, but now we're getting into the man habit. How do you like it?"

"You'll find out how I like it as soon as I can get a policeman," was the angry answer.

"All right!" laughed Jimmie. "I'll go get a

policeman for you. You keep them here, boys and I'll go get a cop."

Ned took Jimmie by the arm and led him away a few paces while Jack and Frank saw that the prostrate men did not have a chance to get up.

"Never mind the police, kid," Ned said. "Go to the first public telephone booth and call up the United States Marshal. Tell him to come in a machine and bring two men with him. Tell them that Nestor sends the word. If he asks for something more definite, just say 'Panama'. He 'll understand that."

"Aw, what's the matter with the police?" asked Jimmie. "It'll take about half an hour for those Secret Service men to get down here."

"It would be a fine thing to turn them over to the police!" laughed Ned. "They would be locked up on a disorderly charge, and we'd have to appear against them in the morning, and they would be fined and pay their fines and get away from us again. I want Uncle Sam to take care of these boys."

Jimmie dashed away without any more argument, and Ned went back to where the prisoners lay. By this time, half a dozen pedestrians had gathered about the little group, and a policeman, attracted by the crowd, was seen making his was down the street.

"I guess we're up against it now!" thought Ned, and Frank and Jack seemed to think so, too, for they gathered closer about their prisoners and looked anxiously at their leader.

When the policeman pushed his way into the little crowd, Ned met him and attempted to draw him away to one side.

"None of that, young feller!" shouted the officer. "There's been too much of this hold-up business been going on on my beat. I want to know what this means!"

"If you'll wait a minute, I'll tell you," Ned replied.

"Tell it to the sergeant!" almost shouted the officer. "I'll call the wagon and give you all a chance to talk."

For a moment, it looked to the boy as if all their efforts of the night had gone awry. He had no doubt that, if taken in, the two men would be bailed out within an hour of their arrival at headquarters, which was exactly what he didn't want.

"These two men," the boy said desperately then, "are Federal prisoners and I have them under arrest."

CHAPTER III

THE "SCOUT" IN DANGER

"You've got to show me!" bawled the officer, evidently anxious to make an arrest which would give him a little prestige with the captain.

Ned turned back the lapel of his coat, exposing his Secret Service badge.

"Now," he said, half angrily, "if you want to get into trouble with Uncle Sam, just try to take these prisoners away from me."

The two suspects, still crouching on the sidewalk, kept there by the threatening muzzles of the boys' automatics, heard what was going on and appealed to the policeman.

"That boy is lying to you," the man in the blue serge suit said. "Anyhow, the best way to settle the matter is to take us all in to headquarters. In fact, under the circumstances, I don't see how you can do anything else."

The crowd was growing larger every minute, and the officer was anxious to settle the matter in his own way. Still, he disliked to proceed in opposition to the lad who carried the Secret Service badge.

"I'll have to take you all in," he finally decided, speaking in a more conciliatory tone to Ned. "If these men are Federal prisoners, the Marshal can take them from there. You're collecting a crowd on the street, and I'll get called down for it by the roundsman, so you'd better be getting ready to move."

Ned was becoming angry, and might have openly resisted the officer in another moment, but, fortunately, the matter was decided by the arrival of a motor car containing two Secret Service men.

"We happened in the office when your message came, Mr. Nestor," one of the men said addressing Ned, "and we didn't let any grass grow under our feet getting down here."

The man in the blue serge suit now sprang forward, with Jack clinging desperately to his arm.

"Officer!" he cried, addressing the policeman. "This is a frameup! These fake officers do not belong in the state of New York. This is a job to get us into another state for trial on a faked-up charge."

The officer gazed from the Secret Service men to the prisoners and hesitated.

"We demand to be taken to headquarters!" the man continued. "We are entitled to the protection of the laws of New York."

"What is it all about?" asked one of the Secret Service men of Ned.

"I don't know whether you understand the case I am working on, or not," Ned said to the officer in a low tone of voice, "but——"

"Yes, I understand," the Secret Service man said. "We were talking about it in the office tonight."

"Well," Ned went on, "these men sent me a fake telegram and attacked me on the street. There is no doubt that they are acting as spies for the men in the mountains. I don't know whether they have made a report or not, but if they have not, they will if they are released."

"I see!" replied the officer. "And they'll put the brigands wise to what you are starting out to do!"

"That's it exactly!" Ned said.

The crowd was now gathering closer and closer about the little group, and shouts of "Run 'em in!" "Put 'em in the cooler!" and "Look at the scared cop!" were heard.

The policeman saw that he was being ridiculed and defied and made a rash effort to decide the matter in his own way.

"I'll take you all in!" he shouted.

Without paying any attention to the blustering officer, the Secret Service men pushed the prisoners into the auto, the boys bundled in

after them, piling in one after another, and the machine went racing up the street, followed by the execrations of the policeman.

"That was a close call!" Ned said. "If those fellows had been taken to headquarters, they would have had something on the wire in less than an hour."

As he spoke he seized the hand of the man in the blue serge suit and snatched a paper from it.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked.

"Merely throwing away a memorandum which is of no use to me now," was the sullen reply.

"I think," Ned said to one of the Secret Service men, "that we'd better stop here long enough to search these fellows."

This was done, but no letters or papers of any kind were found in their possession. The men were taken to the Marshal's office and there locked up.

"Now," said Ned, "we'll find out what it was that fellow tried to throw away."

He drew the paper from a pocket and read the opening sentences as follows:

"Instructions received. All quiet in New York until today. Have now learned that a party of Secret Service operatives will leave for the west tomorrow. They are to take with them a high power motor car which will make you trouble. The party will be under the di-

rection of young Ned Nestor, with whose exploits at Panama you are doubtless familiar. Have your men ready, and when the motor car is unloaded in the hills, use your dynamite!"

"There!" Ned said with a smile. "It seems to me we captured that fellow in the nick of time. You see what would have happened if he had been taken to police headquarters and bailed out. This message would have been on the wires immediately."

"Something like it may already have been sent," suggested one of the Secret Service men.

"I don't think so," Ned replied, "for the reason that this report opens up right in the beginning of things. His despatch seems to cover all the ground up the time of his arrest."

"To whom is the despatch directed?" was asked.

"There is neither date nor address," was the reply. "The man wasn't taking chances when he wrote it. The name of the town and of the individual interested would have been given at the telegraph office at the last minute."

"Well, I guess you've shut off the robbers' source of information, all right," one of the officers laughed, "but what puzzles me now, is this: What we are going to do with these men!"

"You don't have to do anything with them right now," Ned answered. "Lock them up as

train robbers, or as accessories after the fact. That will hold them all right until we bag their partners in the Crazy mountain country."

"That seems to be a good suggestion," said the officer. "Anyway, we'll keep them safe here until you have a chance to do your work."

"I wish we knew," Frank put in, "whether there are any more of them in New York. That message referring to alleged trouble at the factory has put the notion into my head that there may be others there trying to disable the machine."

"It won't take long to find out about that," Jack observed, "I'll telephone to the night watchman again."

The boy returned from the telephone in a few moments and announced that the night watchman did not answer.

"He may be in some other part of the building," suggested Jimmie.

"Yes, and he may be sound asleep, wherever he is," Frank suggested anxiously.

"Call up the messenger office!" suggested Jimmie.

"What's that for?" asked one of the officers.

"The Stevens factory," Ned explained, "is supplied with a signal system which requires attention every twenty minutes. When the watchman turns the key, a bell rings in a messen-

ger office. When the bell doesn't ring on time, a messenger is sent out to investigate."

"I never thought of that," the officer said. "You'd better call up the office at once. It would be a calamity to have anything happen to that motor car now."

Ned went to the 'phone and soon had the messenger office on the wire.

"This is the United States Marshal's office," he said. "Will you kindly tell me when the watchman at the Stevens factory rang in last?"

After waiting a moment the answer came over the wire in an excited voice:

"Forty minutes ago!" the speaker said.

"Have you sent a man over to investigate?" Ned asked.

"We have," was the reply.

"Have you received any report from him yet?"

"We have," was the reply. "The watchman was found lying on the floor of the office, stunned by a blow on the back of the head. A short distance away, a man, evidently the person who attacked him, was discovered lying dead on the floor, shot through the heart. The case is now in the hands of the police."

"It strikes me," Ned said after making his report to the others, "that we'd better get down to the factory. When we caught the two men

just locked up, we evidently didn't snare the whole gang."

"No," said one of the officers. "The night watchman seems to have snared the other."

"There might have been more than one," Ned observed. "I can't understand how a night watchman, knocked entirely out by a blow on the back of the head, could fire a shot at the man who struck him."

"That's so," agreed the officer. "The rascals may have gotten to the machine after all."

"Besides," Ned argued, "you must remember that they telegraphed me to come to the factory, signing Harry Stevens' name to the message. When they did that, they evidently had force enough there to do for me and anyone who came with me."

While they were preparing to leave for the factory, the telephone bell rang again and Ned took down the receiver.

"You were asking about the Stevens factory a short time ago?" a voice said.

"Yes, anything new?" Ned asked.

"Yes," was the reply, "another man has been found, evidently shot by the watchman before he received the blow which rendered him unconscious."

"Is this second man dead?" asked Ned.

"Not dead, but badly knocked out," was the reply.

"I guess we've got 'em all," smiled Ned turning to the others, "but I'm going down there to see if any harm has come to the Scout."

"Of course, we've got to go down there," Jimmie said.

"You little rat!" laughed Ned. "Why don't you go to bed?"

"Every time I go far away from you," Jimmie chuckled, "you get into trouble. Frank and Jack can go to bed, but I'm going out to the factory."

In the end the four boys, accompanied by the Secret Service men, proceeded to the factory and hastened to the finishing room, where they had seen the Scout on the previous afternoon. The machine was intact. Indeed, indications showed that the two men who had received such treatment at the hands of the night watchman had not even entered the room.

Half a dozen policeman were now scattered about the building, and one bluecoat was in the act of leading the man who had been wounded to a police wagon.

"What charge are you going to put against him?" Ned asked.

The officer frowned at the boy and proceeded on his way.

"Perhaps," one of the Secret Service men said, standing in front of the policeman and exhibiting his badge, "you will pay more attention to the question if I ask it."

"What do you want to know?" demanded the officer.

"I want to know what charge you are going to place against this man."

"What's it to you?" frowned the other.

"He is wanted for highway robbery in a territory," the officer replied, fibbing a trifle, "and therefore a Federal prisoner."

"You'll have to tell that to the captain," replied the officer.

"All right!" the Secret Service man replied. "Do you mind my riding up in the wagon with you?"

"Certainly not," was the reply. "All United States officers are welcome to ride in the 'hurry-up' but they can't take any prisoners away from me."

"As you suggest," the other replied, "I will get the captain's permission to take the man out of the custody of the city of New York."

"That's right!" the other Secret Service man said. "Go with him, Jake, and I'll stay here and camp out by the side of the machine. The boys can go home to bed. When you get that fellow away from the captain, Jake, lock him up

with the others, and keep the whole bunch locked up until it is safe to bring them before the grand jury."

The police wagon whirled away and the boys returned to the Black Bear clubroom in the auto which had been used on the down trip. They found Harry Stevens there laboring under great excitement.

"Do you know what's been going on?" he asked.

"Do we?" asked Jimmie. "We've been right in the thick of it."

"Well," Harry went on, "father says we've got to get that machine out tomorrow. He's getting frightened, and says he won't guarantee its safety another day."

CHAPTER IV

A MYSTERIOUS SIGNAL

"What next?" asked Jimmie.

"Supper!" shouted Harry and Frank in chorus.

"All right!" Jimmie answered. "You get supper while I look over the scenery."

The Scout, the modern motor car owned by the Boy Scout Electricians, stood at the side of two parallel lines of steel, not far from Lost Horse creek in the state of Montana. To the north rose Elk mountains; to the east stretched the narrow valley of the Musselshell river; to the south lifted a long, broken chain of Crazy mountains, and far to the west were the dim outlines of the Big Belt range.

The sun had already dropped down behind Big Belt mountains, but its light was still in the sky, its fingers of flame still lay over the distant peaks to the east. The Boy Scout Electricians had reached Lost Horse creek only an hour before, and the rumble of the train which had brought in their motor car might still be heard echoing through wonderful Sixteen Mile canyon.

"This looks pretty good to me!" Frank said,

as he uncovered three electric coils on the motor car and began preparing supper. "Here's number one coil," he went on, "we'll fry ham and eggs on that. And here's number two coil; we'll boil potatoes a la Murphy on that. And number three shall be sacred to the manufacture of coffee."

"Do you know where that package of coffee is?" asked Harry Stevens, poking about in a great stack of provisions which had been unloaded from the car which had brought the Scout.

"It's in that trunk," Frank explained. "I bought about a bushel of the best coffee you ever saw in New York."

The boys had had a very comfortable journey to the point of their operations. The Scout, the now famous motor car, had been stowed away in a special coach in New York and unloaded in the shadows of Crazy mountain. The boys had traveled in Pullmans on the same train, and had enjoyed the scenery greatly.

They had left New York on the day following the incidents described in the last chapter, much to the relief of Harry Stevens' father, who declared that he wouldn't take chances on having the Scout left in his factory another night for all the money there was in the world.

"Why," Mr. Stevens had said, "I prefer dynamite. The fellows you boys are going after,

in my opinion, know what sort of a machine you are going in, and don't like it. Believe me, they'll find some chance to blow it up if it stays in New York another day!"

"We were all ready to start on our journey, anyway," Harry had replied.

But for all that, the boys hastened their departure in order to satisfy the man who had generously provided them with the car.

They had met with no accidents on the way, and their first night in the mountains promised to be a brilliant one. So they laughed and capered about while preparing supper.

While Frank and Harry busied themselves at the electric coils, Ned Nestor and Jimmie walked away to the west and climbed an elevation on the eastern slope of Crazy mountains.

"There!" Ned said, pointing toward Lost Horse creek, "if these robbers have, as is generally believed, a hidden dynamo, it ought to be somewhere along Lost Horse creek. We are now pretty close to the scene of the last robbery, which according to all accounts, was marked by something wonderful in the way of electricity."

"I don't think I ever heard about that," Jimmie wondered.

"Well," Ned replied, "all manner of lights were thrown in front of the train—red, white,

and blue, and how many more I don't know."

"But how were these lights produced?" asked Jimmie.

"They must have been produced by incandescent lamps," was the reply.

"Well, then, why didn't the railroad men get next to the wires?" asked the boy.

"That's the strange part of it," Ned answered. "The lights were strung along and across the track for some distance that night; yet, when the first train following the one which had been robbed reached the scene of the holdup, there were no wires in sight."

"Well, then," Jimmie reasoned, "the officers ought to be able to find the poles from which the wires were suspended."

"Not a pole in sight!" laughed Ned. "Nothing at all in sight. The electric lights seemed to flash out of space and obliterate themselves in an instant. And here's another strange thing—the telegraph wire was tapped here, and a message sent to division headquarters."

"What do you think of that for nerve?" exclaimed Jimmie.

"I haven't got to the 'nervy' part yet," Ned went on. "This message I am telling you about criticized the express company for not having more money in the big safe."

"But the newspapers," Jimmie said, "denied

that the robbers got into the big safe."

"The express people lied about it," Ned replied. "Robbers did get into the big safe, and they did it by the most approved methods."

"The most approved method in New York, Jimmie laughed, "is to steal the money by knowing the combination."

"That's very true," Ned replied, "but the most approved method in the west is different. These fellows burned a hole through the safe by means of electricity."

"Will electricity do that?" asked Jimmie wonderingly.

"It certainly will," Ned answered. "An electric flame of sufficient force will eat into the finest steel like a hot knife eats into butter."

"And they used it here, did they—away off here in the mountains?"

"That's what they did," Ned answered. "And the next morning, there wasn't a wire in sight except those used by the telegraph company. And even if those wires had been used, they couldn't have furnished a current sufficient for the use of the robbers."

"Then, of course, they've got a dynamo hidden in the hills, and it's probably operated by the waters of Lost Horse creek."

"It must be," Ned answered, "for Sixteen Mile creek is quite a distance to the west, and

Smith river is almost as far to the west and north, and the Musselshell hasn't enough fall here."

"If there is any dynamo here we'll find it," said Jimmie confidently.

"And we mustn't seem to be looking for it, either," Ned commented.

"If the robbers are still in this district, they'll watch us close enough whether we seem to be looking for them or not," Jimmie observed. "So, for a few days, I presume we shall have to lie around and fish, and hunt, and shoot craps, and do a whole lot of eating, just like a lot of hungry boys fresh from New York."

"That's the idea!" Ned declared.

The boys stood for a long time on the elevation overlooking the valley of the Musselshell river. It was their first night on the mountains for several months, and the clear, pure air acted on their lungs like wine. Far away to the left they could hear the low rumble of a train. Down from the range near Crazy Peak came the call of night birds. After all the noise and bustle of the city, this quiet corner in the hills seemed like a veritable paradise.

Directly there came a call to supper, and the boys returned to the motor car where they found a table supplied with such a supper as might well have been expected in New York. After the meal was over, the boys set up shelter tents

close to the Scout and, the mountain air growing chill with the going down of the sun, built a great fire of driftwood brought from the low land near the creek.

"And this," Harry said, "is what I call solid comfort."

"Sure! This is all right," Frank replied. "And if we only had a city newspaper, all our wants would be supplied."

"City newspaper?" repeated Jimmie. "If you fellows really want to know what's going on in the world, Ned and I will put our telegraph apparatus to work."

"Aw," laughed Harry, "we wouldn't get anything off those wires but railroad news."

While the boys sat by the campfire discussing the possibilities of electricity, a train consisting principally of Pullmans dashed by.

"Did you see those people rubbering out of the windows at our power station?" laughed Jimmie. "I suppose they think we've driven this motor car in here along the railroad right of way."

"I guess they don't think much about us," Ned suggested. "A train going at that speed would give only a short view of almost anything."

It was growing dark now, and a mass of clouds was drifting over the sky. The wind was

rising in the west, and all indications pointed to a stormy night. Directly, Jimmie arose from the fire and made his way toward the elevation visited by Ned and himself earlier in the evening.

"What's up now!" demanded Harry, as the boy moved off. "Are you going away to get lost again?"

"Lost, nothing!" was the reply. "I'm going up to see how far I can look along the tracks."

"I'm with you!" Harry exclaimed, springing to his feet.

When they reached the elevation Jimmie pointed to the blur of the range to the west far above their heads.

"There isn't any sun over in that direction, is there?" he asked.

Harry laughed and shook his head.

"Nor any moon?" questioned the boy.

"What's the matter with you?" Harry asked. "Are your wheels going too fast tonight?"

"Well," the boy replied, "there's a light up there, and it looks to me like semaphore talk."

"Why didn't you say so before?" asked Harry, excitedly.

"Because I wanted to find out more about it," was the answer. "I saw just a flash of light, and I thought it might be lightning. Then, in a minute, I saw another flash joined

to the first. The two made the letter "H" according to the semaphore signal code."

"Why didn't you tell Ned?" demanded Harry.

"Because I wanted to see whether I was right or not."

"I guess you had a bad dream," Harry suggested.

"Not on your alabaster brow," Jimmie replied. "In just a minute more there came two more flashes and they signalled 'O.' Then while I was thinking what to do, 'W' came. The word was 'How!' "

"Some one must be asking a question," Harry suggested.

"That's about it," the other replied. "The robbers saw us land the Scout here, and they want to know what's going on."

"But, look here," Harry said, "to whom are they talking. Of whom are they asking this question? There must be some one in the valley besides the men who are doing the signalling, and its dollars to apples that they are pretty near our camp, at that."

"Any old time we get off on a trip without being followed, and spied upon, and chased," Jimmie declared, "we'll get a medal apiece made out of a bull's ear. If those hold-up men are keeping cases on us already, we might as well

be cute little sleuths painted on a back drop."

"Well, let's go and tell Ned about it," Harry suggested.

"Aw, let's wait until we have something to tell," answered Jimmie.

The boys had not long to wait, for, while they sat looking up at the great bulk of the mountain to the west, a red light showed to the north of the nearest elevation of the Elk mountains.

CHAPTER V

CUTTING THE WIRES

"And that," Jimmie remarked, "shows that some one to the west is talking with the semaphore man. It seems to me," he added, "that we have got right into the thick of something like action the first thing."

"I wonder if the boys at the camp are taking this in?" asked Harry.

"Ned must be watching it all right," Jimmie submitted. "That's the boy that always has his eyes open."

The boys waited a short time longer, watching the signals to the west, but no more showed, and they went slipping and sliding down the descent toward the camp fire, now blazing high and bringing the Scout and the boys' figures about it out in bold relief.

A short distance from the fire they saw that there were more than two figures about it.

"I guess we've got company," Jimmie said. "These train robbers seem to be friendly people, after all. It's a cinch that they haven't called with friendly intentions, though!"

When they reached the fire they saw three men talking with Ned and Frank. The

strangers, judging from their dress and general appearance, might have been business men in the mountains for an outing. Their faces were smooth-shaven, their clothing seemed to be of the best material, and the dialect of the west was entirely absent from their conversation.

"Boys," Ned said as Jimmie and Harry came up, "these gentlemen are campers like ourselves. Mr. Slosson, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Benson. These, gentlemen," he added turning to the visitors, "are the other members of the party I told you about—Jimmie and Harry."

"Glad to meet you, boys," said Slosson heartily. "We came into the hills in search for solitude, but we are glad to have you near us all the same."

"Where is your camp?" asked Ned.

"Up in the hills to the north," was the reply "We built a little shack up there, and now we put in most of our time looking over the scenery. That's a fine car you have there," he added, pointing to the Scout.

"A present from Harry's father," Ned replied. "We think a lot of it."

The three men stepped toward the car and looked it over critically.

"All the modern appliances," Hughes said. "She ought to be able to do everything but talk."

"We've been studying electricity in New York," Harry interrupted, with a sly wink at Jimmie, "and we loaded the car up with a whole lot of apparatus which may not be of any use to us at all."

"Yes," Ned went on, "while we're here, we're going to practice with wireless and all the electrical fads we've been reading about."

"It is a fine thing in this age of cigar-store young men to find boys who are interested in science," Hughes remarked. "I have boys about your age, and their idea of sport is to sit in a base ball park and watch the other fellows take the exercise."

Jimmie was wondering as to whether he ought to mention the signals and the red light in the presence of the visitors, but he finally decided not to do so.

"I am somewhat interested in electricity, myself," Benson observed, "and I'd like to witness some of your experiments."

"Oh, we're new at it," Ned replied. "We'll probably botch everything we undertake, but we'll have had the fun of getting out into the mountains anyway."

"Do you know anything about electricity as applied to telegraphy?" asked Benson.

Jimmie was about to make a hasty reply, but

a nudge from Frank warned him to let Ned do most of the talking.

"We haven't got that far," Ned replied with a smile. "We're trying to make electricity cook our meals and that's about all just now."

"After we graduate in that, we may try to learn the telegraphic code, We'll have to have that, won't we, if we try to do anything with wireless? Perhaps you may be able to show us something about this long distance work without wires," Frank suggested.

Both Frank and Ned looked so innocent, so apparently in earnest, that Jimmie and Harry were obliged to get out of the lighted circle in order to conceal their amusement. The idea of Ned not knowing anything about telegraphy was something excruciatingly funny to them.

"Do you suppose those fellows are taking that all in?" whispered Jimmie.

"Of course," Harry answered. "They think we're just a bunch of kids up here to make a lot of fool experiments which we wouldn't be permitted to make in the city."

"That's all right!" the other replied. "But those fellows didn't come down here just to make a formal call. In my opinion, those semaphore signals from Crazy Peak told them to come."

"Do you really think they're train robbers?" asked Harry.

"That's my idea," Jimmie replied.

During the long conversation which followed between Ned and the visitors, the boy did his best to give the impression that he knew nothing whatever of electricity except what he had learned in the cheap and inaccurate hand-books which now flood the market. The visitors listened very patiently to explanations which showed only ignorance.

At ten o'clock, when the three started away from the camp, Ned and Frank volunteered to walk a short distance with them, the idea being, of course, to learn the direction, if not the exact location, of their camp. The visitors firmly but courteously insisted that the boys would be apt to get lost on the way back, and so went on alone.

"Now you watch," Jimmie said as the men disappeared in the darkness, walking toward the Musselshell river, "and you'll see some report from them as soon as they get back to camp."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Harry.

"I mean," was the reply, "that when they get to their shack, as they call it, they'll send out some signal giving their understanding of the situation here."

"They certainly will," Ned cut in. "They'll tell their companions over on Crazy Ridge what they think of this little old Boy Scout expedition."

"Sure," Jimmie exclaimed, "and if they think we're bold bad men, they'll burn a red light; and if they think we're easy young kids from the Bowery, they'll hang out a green light; and if they don't know what to make of us, they'll be likely to show blue."

"I'd like to know how you found out what kind of lights they'll use to express their ideas!" Frank laughed.

"Well," Jimmie said, "they'll communicate, won't they? And a red light shows danger, doesn't it? And green stands for verdancy, doesn't it? And blue is the way a man feels when he don't know anything about what to do."

"You just wait till I get back to New York," Frank suggested, "and I'll have Dad print a book entitled 'Jimmie McGraw on the Primary Colors'."

"Laugh if you want to!" Jimmie exclaimed. You just see if they don't signal.

"And here's another thing," Ned said. "If they do signal, you can tell by the time which elapses, just about how far their camp is from this spot. If they're close by, the signal will

come very soon. If they're some distance away, it may not come in an hour."

The boys waited for an hour or more before any such signal as they were expecting made its appearance. Then a red light showed from a foot hill beyond the Musselshell river.

"That means we are considered bold, bad men!" said Jimmie, with a grin.

"Now, watch the Crazy range for an answer," Harry added.

"So you boys saw those signals, too, did you?" laughed Ned.

"Of course, we did," replied Jimmie. "We didn't go up there with our eyes shut."

"Do you know how these semaphore signals were made?" asked Ned.

"No," replied Jimmie, "I don't. They seemed to stand right out in the air."

"I think I know," Ned went on. "They have long, thin strips of highly polished steel. These are doubtless hinged in the middle so as to provide for the letters which require semaphore arms meeting at an angle."

"That explains one part of it," Jimmie said doubtingly, "but these strips of polished steel wouldn't show in the darkness."

"Suppose," Ned went on, "that a powerful electric light was turned upon the metal strip. What then?"

"You've got it!" Jimmie replied. "You sure have got it!"

"Yes," Harry broke in, "and the explanation shows that the hold-up men surely have their electrical apparatus in action."

"It has been positively stated," Ned continued, "that these hold-up men tap wires and take train orders in transit. It is claimed that in this way they possess themselves of knowledge concerning heavy shipments of money."

"It is a notable fact," he went on, "that only the well-filled safes of the express companies are attacked. The robbers appear to have exact information of the approach of any train worth looting."

"I wonder," Frank put in, "whether there will be anything doing tonight."

"That's just what I was thinking," Ned replied, "and I've a great notion to tap the wire and find out what is going on. Suppose we make a sneak half a mile or so up the track and see what we can learn?"

"Why not right here?" asked Harry.

"Say, but you're the cute little plainclothes man!" Jimmie exclaimed. "You'd have us mounting a pole and cutting the wire in the center of the stage, wouldn't you?"

"That expresses the situation exactly," Frank

declared. "Those fellows are watching this camp, all right."

"Well, come on, Ned, if you're going to hear the wires tick," Jimmie exclaimed. "We'll go up the track half a mile and leave Harry and Frank to make themselves conspicuous around the blaze."

Ned and Jimmie went to the Scout, took out the climbers, the relay set, the tackle, and walked off up the track.

A short distance from the camp the track turned sharply away to the south in order to pass around a rocky prominence which shot down from the foot hills. Under the protection of this shoulder of rock, Ned began operations.

The night was very dark, but the flashlights supplied ample illumination for the work he had to do. He was up the pole in a moment. The tackle was secured to the wire and the instrument-wires connected with the main line, thus forming a horseshoe loop leading from the inside of each clamp through the relay.

The instrument put on by Ned was, of course, dead until the main line was cut between the clamps. When all was ready, Ned drew out his nippers and cut the wire, which, held in position by the clamps, did not sag in the least. Then the current, instead of passing along the main

line, circled into the relay through the horseshoe, setting the latter chattering.

Jimmie, standing anxiously below, tried to read the message passing through the relay, but did not succeed. In five minutes, however, Ned was at his side, his apparatus in hand and the main wire repaired. Jimmie saw by his manner that something of importance had been discovered.

"It's just this way," Ned said presently, "A half million in specie will pass through Sixteen Mile canyon at four o'clock tomorrow morning. I heard the talk over the wire. The robbers heard it also."

CHAPTER VI

WIRELESS IN THE HILLS

"How do you know the robbers heard it?" Jimmie asked in amazement.

"They have an instrument to the west somewhere," was the reply, and their operator isn't an expert. He talked with division headquarters in a way that no regular operator would do."

"Do you think headquarters caught on?" Jimmie asked.

"I can't say, of course," Ned replied, "but it seems to me that they should have done so."

"In that case, they may not send the money," the boy suggested.

"We'll have to find out about that," Ned said, after a pause.

"Well," Jimmie went on, "why didn't you talk with division headquarters and find out if they suspected there was anything wrong?"

In the darkness Jimmie heard his companion chuckling softly to himself.

"Now, what have I said?" asked Jimmie. "I must have been making another break."

"You see," Ned said presently, "those robbers may be on the wire every minute from now until

that specie train passes. If I should try to talk with headquarters, the result would be that we should be driven out of here before morning. Our only hope of success in this undertaking lies in our keeping up the impression that we are just electrical cranks out here on a vacation."

The boys walked along together in silence until the campfire came into view.

"It seems as if we ought to be able to do something," Jimmie suggested, then.

"We've got to do something," Ned replied, "but just now I can't decide on the correct course to pursue."

"Back there, not far from where you cut the wire," Jimmie exclaimed, "there is one of these three-wheeled railroad motors. I saw it where it had been dumped off the track near the pole you climbed. Suppose I climb up on that, go to the next station, and wire in from there."

Again the boy heard Ned chuckle.

"What difference would it make," Ned finally asked, "where the message was sent from? If you could make the operator at the next station understand the importance of the message, and could induce him to ground his west wire while talking with division headquarters, that might do the trick, provided these highwaymen haven't another relay still east of his station."

"Well, then, why not try that?" asked Jimmie.

"To tell you the truth," Ned replied, "I'm afraid to risk it. There is no knowing where those fellows have the wires cut. And once they get the notion that we're interfering with their plans, we may as well leave the country."

"I see that, of course," Jimmie answered. "Still we've got to take some chance in order to save this train."

"Oh, I think we shall be able to do that, all right," Ned said confidently. "If I only knew just where the hold-up will be attempted, I might amuse the train robbers at least."

"Where was the last one?" asked Jimmie.

"Not far from this point," was the reply.

"Then the next hold-up won't be here," Jimmie suggested. "I believe it will be in Sixteen Mile canyon," he added.

"We can't pick out any one spot," said Ned. "Those fellows are always doing the unexpected. The fact is," he continued, "that we don't know that there is to be any hold-up. All we know is that a specie train is going over the line to-night, and that the robbers probably have information of the fact."

"The robbers," Jimmie grinned "are not overlooking any bets. If there is a half million in gold doing down the line to-night, they'll try to geezle some of it."

"That's my idea," Ned replied.

When the boys reached the campfire they found Frank and Harry puzzling over a display of lights they had observed in the west.

"What kind of lights were they?" asked Ned.

"Roman candles!" replied Harry.

"Sky rockets!" answered Frank.

"How high up were they?" asked Ned.

"Not more than fifty feet," was the reply.

"Are you sure they were not produced by electricity?" Ned questioned.

"They might have been," answered Frank. "You see, they came and went just like snuffing out a candle and lighting it again, or like turning the switch on an incandescent lamp and then turning it off."

Here was a new proposition for consideration. There could be little doubt that the bandits had been signalling to each other. Ned was certain that if the signals could have been read, they would have given information concerning the proposed hold-up.

The boys studied over the problem for a long time, and it was finally decided that the best thing for them to do would be to watch along the track, so far as they could cover it, in an effort to locate the robbers.

"If we can learn where they are going to try to turn the trick," Frank exclaimed, "we can

find some means of stopping the train before it gets there."

In accordance with this plan the boys permitted their fire to die down in order to give the impression that they were all asleep, and, two by two, they set forth in the darkness; Ned and Jimmie going to the west and Frank and Harry to the east.

It was very dark, and a heavy wind was still coming from the west. Aside from the roaring of the wind and the occasional falling of a rock, dislodged from some nearby precipice, or the moaning and creaking of the trees, nothing could be heard. Even the footsteps of the boys were indistinguishable as they stumbled over the ties, occasionally tapping the rail sharply with an incautious shoe. A typical night for a hold-up.

"If we could only use our electric flashlights," Jimmie grumbled as he walked along by Ned's side, "we wouldn't be breaking our feet over these hunchback ties. This is certainly fierce!"

"Don't talk!" Ned whispered. "Listen, and keep your eye out for any break in the clouds which may reveal signs of wires or other electrical apparatus. There's probably something of the sort here."

"Gee!" Jimmie cried. "If we could connect

our dynamo with their electric system, we could bust it up like a bubble, couldn't we?"

"That depends upon the strength of their own dynamo," Ned replied. "They may have a strong system of their own."

Half a mile from the camp the boys saw a blue light flash for a single instant directly over the railroad right of way.

"There's number one!" Jimmie whispered. "Now wait for number two."

Number two came in a moment. It also was blue. The lights appeared to be elevated thirty or forty feet above the roadway.

"I have heard," Ned said, still in a whisper, "that colors are used instead of dashes and dots, in carrying the Morse code. I have heard, too, that blue represents a dash; that red represents a dot, and that the spaces between words are represented by lights of any color convenient for use. Now these people may be talking in code. We'll soon learn whether they are or not."

"Cripes!" Jimmie exclaimed. "This Boy Scout education is a great thing, isn't it? If we had always hung around cigar stores and pool rooms in New York, we wouldn't know any more about the Morse code now than a rabbit! Now we know about all the signs and codes

used for communication the world over. Great thing this Boy Scout business!"

"There!" Ned cried. "There's the third blue light! Do you know what that would represent, Jimmie?" he asked.

"You bet I do!" replied Jimmie. "Three dashes! That means 'O'. I don't think I'll ever forget those signals! Don't you remember how we read them on the mountains in Mexico and how the wig-wag men laughed at us?"

The wind came up the right of way from Sixteen Mile canyon like a cyclone, but when the next light came it did not waver as a torch or a rocket would have wavered. It was a blue one, and Jimmie caught Ned impulsively by the arm as he waited for the next to show.

It came in a moment, red, followed by a green one.

"That's the word 'ON'!" Jimmie exclaimed. "That's easy enough!"

"Yes," Ned answered. "They seem to be using the green for word spaces."

The boys waited impatiently for more signals to come. The first light which showed was blue. This was followed by another blue. Then came red.

"That's 'G'!" exclaimed Jimmie. "On G. I'll bet I can guess what that word is now! You see if I can't."

"Two reds and a blue," Ned said. "That's 'U'. And here comes a red and a blue which mean 'A', and a red and a blue and a red, which stand for 'R', and a blue and two reds which represent 'D'."

"I knew it!" Jimmie cried. "'On Guard'—that's what it means! I guess they'll find us on guard, all right! Don't you think so, Ned?"

"It looks to me as if the hold-up—if there is to be one—will be pulled off about where those lights are," Ned went on. "Now the question is, how are we going to stop it without letting them know exactly what we're here for?"

"Which way is the train coming from?" asked Jimmie.

"It is coming from the east," was the reply.

"Then I'll chase up to that track motor and stop the train!"

"That seems to be about the best thing for us to do," Ned replied.

"The train won't reach this place until nearly four o'clock," Jimmie said, "and I can get a long way up the track before meeting it."

"That seems to be the only way," Ned said hesitatingly, "and yet I don't like it a little bit. Some of the train men, or some of the passengers, will be sure to blab about the train being stopped by a boy. They may even try to make a hero of you as is usual in such cases.

In any event, the story of how the robbery was blocked is sure to come to the ears of the brigands, and that will spoil our work here, as I have stated before."

"Now, then," Jimmie said, "what's the matter with our wireless? Do you suppose they have a wireless at division headquarters?"

"The railroad may not have aerials at Miles City," Ned replied, "but the chances are that some electrical faddist is playing with the wireless there. In fact, I think I read that Boy Scouts have an aerial there, and that they are meeting with great success in receiving and transmitting messages over spaces not exceeding five hundred miles."

"Then everything is easy!" exclaimed Jimmie, "We'll hustle back to the camp and put up our collapsible aerial on the highest point we can find. Then we'll see if we can make the air do the talking for us."

The boys were soon at the campfire. Frank and Harry were already there, having discovered no indications of brigands to the east of the fire. They were more than enthusiastic when the situation was explained.

"Where is there a good place to stick up the aerial?" asked Harry.

"We want to get it up as high as we can," Frank suggested, "and so I'll go and hunt up

trees on the foot hills while you boys get out the wires. Just attach the wires to the dynamo and set the old lady kicking, and we'll have a wireless station here in about ten minutes."

The folding aerial, consisting of slender wires of copper, was taken from the Scout, and Jimmie and Frank started away with it. They soon found two trees easy of ascent, and in a short time the wireless extended far above the top of the undergrowth, reaching from one tree to another.

"We'll be talking in thirty minutes," declared Ned.

"Here's hoping the robbers won't see what we're doing," said Frank.

CHAPTER VII

BOY SCOUT IN TROUBLE

In a moment Ned came from the car with a suit case containing the apparatus for making the connection with the dynamo, and also the head piece for the operator. When all was ready the current was turned on the wire leading to the delicate instruments for sending forth and receiving messages. Ned hastily adjusted the receiver to his ear and began listening. The motors were now running, of course, and the display of electricity from the aerial wires was by no means slight, so the boy was anxious to get the experiment over as soon as possible.

It did not seem to him that the robbers could be near enough to hear the rattle of the motors or see the sparking of the wires, still, it was his purpose not to take chances.

He listened for a short time, adjusting the syntonizer and coherer, waiting to pick some message out of the air showing that another wireless operator was busy in some direction. The boys stood by his side almost holding their breath in the excitement of the moment.

"What do you get, Ned?" Jimmie asked.

"Aw, let him alone!" Harry exclaimed.

"Yes, let him alone!" Frank added. "Don't you see he's got to tune up that machine before he can tell where he's at! You've got to tune up those wireless machines just like an old fiddle before you can do anything with them. Give the boy a chance."

"If I knew as much about wireless telegraphy as you don't know," Jimmie grinned, "I'd write a book about it. How's he going to tune up the instrument when he hasn't got any strings to tune it up with?"

"I guess you don't know much about it."

"The tuning up," explained Harry, "consists in adjusting the current under his control to a current in some other part of the country. When these two currents come to the same pitch, that means conversation."

"Look at him!" cried Jimmie. "Look at Ned! He's got something right now! He's smiling like he smiles when he gets a big fish on the hook. What you got, Ned?" he continued. "A message for me?"

Ned turned toward the group of boys with a smile on his face.

"There's another wireless operator within reach," he said. "I hear him talking all kinds of foolishness."

"I'll bet its those Boy Scouts at Miles City!" Harry cried.

You just wait a minute and I'll find out." Ned said turning back to his work.

Presently his face brightened and he bent forward intently.

"It's Miles City!" he said. "Now wait till I catch him."

After a short wait, he again turned to his chums and said:

"That's the Elk Patrol in Miles City."

After this the conversation which passed over the wireless currents of the air were something like this:

"Who are you?" Ned asked.

"Boy Scout." was the reply. "Who are you?"

"Wolf Patrol, New York." Ned replied.

"Where are you?" was the next question.

"Out in the mountains near Sixteen Mile canyon."

"Out camping?" asked Miles City.

"Just out on a vacation." Ned replied.

"That's a bad district to visit for a vacation."

"That's why I called you tonight." Ned answered. "I think there's something going on here in the way of a hold-up."

"There have been several robberies there lately." Miles City answered.

"And there will be another tonight." Ned went on. "unless you can get to the railroad

officials and tell them that the robbers are waiting for the special train which is to reach Sixteen Mile canyon not far from four o'clock. Can you reach the railway officers?"

"I can send a Scout there," was the reply. "But how did you find out about this?"

"I had the nerve to cut the wire and listened," Ned replied.

"And the robbers were listening, too?" questioned the other.

"I think so," Ned answered. "Anyway, the brigands are showing signals between me and Sixteen Mile canyon."

"All right," Miles City replied. "I'll send a Scout over to the railroad office and let you know what they think about it."

A conversation consisting principally of questions was carried on between the two operators for about ten minutes and then the Boy Scout at Miles City came back to the point of interest.

"The division superintendent is here," he said, "and I have told him of the message I received from you. He wants to know something about the light signals you referred to. He is waiting."

"The light signals," Ned answered, "were in the Morse code—blue and red used for dashes and dots. 'Be on your guard' was the message conveyed by them."

" 'That's the old, old game,' he says," the boy Scout at Miles City went on. "Now he wants to know what you can do to stop the train."

"Unfortunately," Ned answered, "we can't do a thing. We are working under instructions, and the slightest interference on our part might defeat our mission. Say to him 'Panama'."

"The superintendent says he understands," the Elk at Miles City answered, "and his advice is that you keep out of it entirely."

"Where is the train now?" asked Ned.

"He says that it must be near Waldheim," was the answer.

"Can he stop it there?" Ned asked.

"He'd have to stop it at Harlowton," was the reply. "He says he'll send a pilot loaded with gunmen on ahead, and wants to know what he can do for you in payment of the service you have rendered tonight."

"I guess he knows where my pay comes from," Ned answered. "And now," he added, "I'd better ring off. I'm getting my current from a dynamo on a motor car, and the motors and the wires are making a lot of noise. I'm afraid the robbers may have heard the racket already. Their signal lights were not more than half a mile to the west."

After a little further talk, Ned laid down the

receiver, and all evidences of the wireless connection were soon obliterated. The aerials were taken down; the delicate receiving and sending instruments replaced in the suit case; the supply wire coiled up, and the motors stopped.

"There!" Frank exclaimed. "Unless they heard the clamor of the motors or saw the wires sputtering, the brigands don't know a thing about what's been doing. We are still innocent bystanders!"

It was well that the wireless apparatus was hustled out of sight, for in ten minutes, while the boys sat before the blaze preparing coffee and making egg sandwiches, the man who had been introduced as Hughes made his appearance, showing suddenly in the *circle* of light as though he had been watching in the shadows.

"You seem to be a night-owl, too," Ned said with a smile as the man stepped forward. "Come on and have a seat. You're just in time for a midnight luncheon. We're glad to see you again."

"I am a bad sleeper," Hughes replied. "I was worn out when I left the city, but this mountain air and exercise are doing me a whole lot of good. I hope you also will be profited by them."

"Why didn't you bring your friends along?" asked Jimmie.

"My friends are asleep," was the reply, "and I ought to be, but I heard something which sounded like the snapping of motors and I thought you might be in trouble. I came over to see."

"We had the motors going in order to manufacture a little electricity," Ned said. "Look here," he added pointing to some wires which lay on the ground, "we're going to try to put up an arc light right here over the car."

"That will be a novelty at least," Hughes answered. "So it was your motors I heard, after all?"

"It must have been," replied Frank.

"Have you been in camp all night?" Hughes asked after a moment.

"Sure we have," replied Harry. "You can't get us away from this fire in the night. I've heard that there are wild animals in this country. We were told in New York that Bears and Wolves might be found here," he added with a sly wink at Ned.

"I understand that there are wild animals," Hughes replied, "but we haven't see any yet."

"I wouldn't mind taking a couple of Bear skins back for rugs," Ned laughed. "And a couple of Wolf hides wouldn't come amiss, either."

Harry and Jimmie immediately ran out of the

circle of light, fearing that Hughes might see the amusement in their faces.

"I guess that gink would like a couple of Wolf hides," Jimmie whispered, "if he knew how near the wild animals were to him, he'd want a gun in each hand, but I don't think he even suspects."

"The reason why I asked if you have been at the camp all night," Hughes went on, "is that a couple of hours ago one of my companions reported seeing lights on the railroad right-of-way. I laughed at him, as there is no possible chance of lights being where he claimed to have seen them, but he insisted that he did see lights, and I thought perhaps you might explain the phenomena."

"I guess he must have been reading a dream book," Frank replied with a grin, "or," he added, "he might have seen reflections from our lights. If there's anything like ghost lights showing around here," he went on, "I'm going to streak it for civilization."

"He was probably mistaken," Hughes said. "And now," he added, "if you'll give me a cup of that fine coffee you're making, I'll hike back to the shack and go to bed."

"How far is it?" Frank asked.

"Why, it must be in the neighborhood of a

couple of miles," was the reply, "but I can make it in an hour or so."

"I'll tell you what you do," Ned said. "It is dark and looks like rain, so we'll make up a bunk for you in one of our tents, and you can stay right here with us. How will that do?"

The expression that flashed over Hughes' face at that moment showed Ned that he thought it would do very well. The boy had little doubt then that Hughes had been sent there to watch them during the night, and that he preferred a bunk in a tent to a lonely vigil near the rocks.

"Since you mention it," Hughes replied, "I wouldn't mind staying here all night. Still, I'm afraid my nervous manner would keep some of you boys awake. I can't sleep, you know, and I get up and walk about, and smoke, and wait for daylight. I need sleep badly, too."

"You needn't worry about keeping us awake," Ned said. "We'll sleep soundly enough. We'll let you lie as long as you want to in the morning, and give you a good breakfast before you go away. I hope you will come here often for, to tell the truth, we're getting just a little bit lonesome."

In a short time Hughes disappeared in one of the shelter tents. Jimmie and Harry peered through a small hole which they cut in the canvas

and ran off into the darkness, snickering and pounding each other on the back.

"Blest if he hasn't gone to bed!" Jimmie whispered. "Now what's he done that for? Funniest thing I ever heard of."

"It's the best thing for us that ever happened," Harry declared. "From this night we're above suspicion, so far as those fellows are concerned. He's given us a beautiful alibi all right."

"Yes," the other said, "and he's made a beautiful alibi for himself. Did you think of that? For all we know, this may be the leader of the hold-up men. He may be the man who does all the planning, and who furnishes the brains for all their undertakings. He may be the very man the officers are after.

"Now, you see, if a robbery should be pulled off tonight, and he should be accused of it, he could point right to our little shelter tent and tell all the judges and sheriffs in the world to go chase themselves. I reckon he's a sly fellow."

"We're always going on the assumption," Harry said, "that these three men are highwaymen. Now they may not be highwaymen at all, and we ought not to accuse them of being criminals until we have better proof than our own suspicions. We want to be fair."

"All right," Jimmie said. "We'll find out

pretty soon what role they are playing. You'll find they've got the villian's part all right."

Long before three o'clock the boys, now lying together in one tent, began listening for the rumble of the pilot which was to herald the approach of the specie train. More than once Jimmie crept out of the tent and walked up the track to the east, looking for the headlight which seemed to him to be about due.

On one of these excursions up the track he saw a figure lying crouched not far from the right of way. His first impression was that all his movements had been watched. Then he saw a pale face looking appealingly up at him, then a hand was lifted, palm toward him, the little finger held across by the thumb. The salute of the Boy Scouts!

"What's your motto?" asked Jimmie drawing nearer to the figure.

"Be prepared!" was the hesitating reply.

"What patrol?" asked Jimmie.

"Panther Patrol, Chicago," was the reply.

Jimmie took the boy by the hand with the intention of lifting him to his feet, but the action brought a cry of pain from the boy's lips and Jimmie released his hold.

"I was thrown off a train yesterday afternoon by a brakeman," the boy explained, "and I've been lying here ever since. I guess my leg's broken."

CHAPTER VIII

A NOISE IN THE NIGHT

"We've been over this ground several times tonight," Jimmie explained, "and it's a wonder we didn't see you."

"You didn't look in the ditch, I guess," the injured boy replied. "I just crawled out of it a moment ago."

"Sure, we didn't," answered Jimmie. "Now you lie right here while I go back to the camp and get another Scout and a stretcher and we'll carry you in. We're always ready to give first aid."

Jimmie lost no time in getting back to the camp and pulling Frank out of his bunk.

"Come on," he said, "we're first aid to the injured. Get the stretcher and come along with me."

"What have you found now?" Frank asked rubbing his eyes sleepily.

"Panther, Chicago, with a broken leg," Jimmie answered briefly.

Before long the boys had the wounded lad safely tucked away in one of the shelter tents. This done, the two sat down before the fire

again. Directly they saw Hughes looking out at them.

"Some one hurt?" asked the man.

"We picked up a wounded boy a short distance up the track," Jimmie replied, "and we're going to take care of him till we can send him home."

"How did it happen?" asked Hughes.

"Ditched by a brute of a brakeman!" answered Jimmie.

"Railroad men are up to tricks like that!" Hughes declared, leaving his tent and approaching the fire. "They *are* brutes!"

In the excitement of caring for the wounded boy, Jimmie had almost forgotten to look and listen for the pilot which was to lead the specie train from Harlowton. Hughes seemed to have been forgetting something also, for he frequently drew forth his watch and sat in a listening attitude.

While they sat there each busy with his own thoughts and suspicions, the heavy rumble of wheels was heard followed by the challenging whistle of a locomotive. Hughes sprang excitedly to his feet and moved toward the track. His face was set; his manner eager.

"That train is ahead of time," Ned said, drawing out his watch and looking at Hughes critically.

The boy had slept all through the little adventure carried out by Jimmie and Harry, but had been awakened by the conversation carried on in front of his tent. He understood, of course, that it was not the specie train approaching, but the pilot, which was likely to run anywhere from ten to thirty minutes in advance of the other.

His object in calling the attention of Hughes to the time was to ascertain if possible by that gentleman's manner whether he had really been awaiting the approach of the specie train. If thirty minutes ahead of time, Ned understood, the specie train might be able to escape the attentions of the would-be robbers.

The boy believed that any possibility of a failure in the proposed attack would be strongly reflected in Hughes' face; perhaps displayed in some incautious remark. Hughes, of course, did not know if the approaching engine was drawing a single coach full of armed men instead of the specie train and so, as Ned figured, his status as a robber or as a gentleman vacationist might be established.

Hughes, however, gave no indications of his real thoughts. He stood for a second with his watch in his hand and then turned back to the fire.

"I often hear the trains pass," he said, "but

I have never noted the hour. I wouldn't know whether it was early or late."

"I only know by the time-table," Ned went on. "Perhaps it isn't the through express, at that."

In a moment the headlight of a locomotive came around the curve to the east, and almost before the boys could catch their breath, the monster engine trailing a single coach flashed by.

As the rear platform disappeared from the blaze of red built up by the campfire, they saw two men standing in the doorway with sinister looking guns in their hands. Then, for the first time that night, Hughes seemed to be excited. He hastened back to the shelter tent where he had slept, procured his hat, which he had left lying there, and returned to the fire. His voice was husky as he spoke to Ned.

"I've got to get back to camp," he said. "The boys will expect me there at daylight, and I want to take my time on the way."

"Sorry to have you go," Ned said, "but if we could see beyond those mountains we would observe a streak of daylight in the east, as it is now nearly four o'clock. Come down whenever you can, and bring your friends with you. We shall always be glad to see you."

Hughes promised to visit them often and started away almost on a run.

"I'll just bet that gink is having mental troubles of his own right now," Jimmie exclaimed as Hughes disappeared in the darkness. "He's figuring on how his men will attack that armed car and pick up a load of lead instead of a load of gold."

The boys stood listening by the fire a short time, expecting to hear shots from the west, but none came. The wind was blowing directly from that direction, and it seemed to them that they must have heard any shots fired.

"It's a gamble," Jimmie said, "that they've let that pilot engine go by, and that they're still waiting for the specie train."

"Yes," Ned said in a disgusted tone, "and the chances are that we're to blame for it."

"Why do you say that?" asked Frank.

"Because," Ned answered, "we ought, by hook or crook, to have kept Hughes here. The chances are that he ran to an electric switch somewhere and threw out a signal to his men."

"He certainly had plenty of time to warn them," Harry suggested.

While this conversation had been in progress, Jimmie had disappeared in the darkness to the east. In a short time the ringing of metal on metal was heard, and the boy dashed into the firelight riding on the railroad motor which had been discovered some hours before.

"All aboard for the wreck!" he shouted. "This is the only rubberneck car that shows train robbers in the act of train robbing. All aboard for the scene of the conflict! You can ride on the rods."

"You little monkey!" Frank shouted. "Where are you going with that car? You're likely to get a bullet into your neck."

"Or the specie train will run you down," Harry put in. "If you take my advice, you'll get that contraption off the track right now."

The noise of the approaching train was now distinctly heard and, accepting the advice thus given, Jimmie consented to the removal of the motor from the track. The train went by in a moment, the windows of the Pullmans blazing with light, the express and mail cars dark. It was quite evident that the story of the prospective hold-up had been told to some of the passengers.

After the departure of the train the motor was again placed on the track and, with all the boys on board, except Harry, who was left to watch the camp, she sped swiftly away to the west. Half an hour's run brought the boys to the mouth of Sixteen Mile canyon. Nothing out of usual had been observed on the way.

When they turned into the canyon, however, they were surprised to see the tail lights of the

specie train standing only a few rods away. A near approach showed little crowds assembled in the vicinity of the locomotive.

"I wonder if they got her, after all?" Jimmie asked.

"It looks like it," Frank replied. "Suppose we leave the motor here and join the rubber-necks up at the engine."

This course was adopted, and when the boys reached the gathering they found the pilot engine standing only a few yards away. As was afterwards explained, the pilot, in order to quiet the suspicions of the robbers, had passed through the canyon and backed in again to meet the specie train. No shots had been fired, and so it was the general belief of the passengers and some of the train men that they had been the victims of a gigantic hoax.

The boys, of course, attracted no particular attention in the crowd, and they wandered about freely, looking for what they fully expected to see—one or all of the three men who had visited them on the previous afternoon. But the men were not there.

"They're too foxy," Jimmie explained. "They don't want to be seen anywhere near where the hold-up was to have been pulled off."

"That's right," Ned replied. "And we won't

see them again tonight probably, so we'll all go back home and go to bed.

This they did, although it was broad daylight when they reached the Scout. Harry sat by the fire nodding, and it was not thought necessary for anyone to remain on guard, so in five minutes all the boys were asleep.

Ned, however, dropped into one of his old sleepless moods as soon as his head touched the pillow. He wondered if, by any possibility, the robbers suspected him of having interfered in their plans. He wondered, too, if Hughes had succeeded in warning his men away when the pilot with its squad of armed men went by.

After laying awake for an hour, he sat up on his bunk and looked out. He heard the wounded boy moaning softly in his sleep; heard the call of the birds in the trees not far away; heard the murmur of the river and then, cutting into the other sounds sharply, viciously, came the rasping sound of a file cutting tempered steel.

"And that," he mused, reaching for his revolver, "means that some one is tampering with the Scout."

Weapon in hand, he slipped out under the canvas wall of the tent and, crouching as he ran, dashed toward the motor car. The sounds he had heard had proceeded from the opposite side of the machine.

When he approached the rear of the automobile a whistle came from some point in the rocks to the west and a figure bending over the dynamo on the Scout straightened up and ran, making for the west. Ned lifted his revolver and fired.

"Halt!" he said. "I will shoot to kill next time."

The man ducked low, dodged swiftly about from right to left, and ran on. A bullet fired from the rocks whistled uncomfortably near Ned's ear.

The only thing for the boy to do was to return to the Scout and ascertain if any serious injury had been inflicted on the dynamo.

He found Jimmie sitting on the ground by the machine.

An examination showed that an attack had been made on one of the main feed wires, but that the file had only scraped the surface when the interruption came.

"I guess they're onto us after all," Jimmie suggested. "Do you think they suspect we had anything to do with preventing the hold-up?"

"I have no idea that they suspect us," Ned answered. "If they did suspect us, they would do something more than try to disable the machine.

"I guess that's right," Jimmie answered.

"The fact of the matter is," Ned went on, "those fellows object very seriously to our presence here. I don't think they suspect us of being in cahoots with the railroad or the officers of the law, but they know that we are about to try many electrical experiments, and they fear that their own private system will be discovered."

"We haven't discovered it yet," Jimmie said. "We've seen its lights and that's about all."

"That's true," said Ned. "We have yet to find the hidden dynamo."

CHAPTER IX

JIMMIE AND THE BEAR

"I'm sorry this incident happened," Ned added, thoughtfully. "The chances are that our friends the robbers will now suspend operations for a few weeks, and we will be left here with a lot of idle time on our hands. I don't like the idea of it."

"Aw, they won't run away!" Jimmie objected. "They'll stay right here to gather in the mazuma."

"No," Ned insisted, "they won't. They'll take up all their electrical apparatus and disappear in the mountains."

"Well," Harry observed. "We don't have to hurry back to New York, and we can spend our time fishing and hunting, and playing that we're wireless operators. That will be fun."

"I don't mind having the time of our lives in the mountains," Ned replied, "but I like to get my work done first."

"There!" Jimmie said, with a grin, "I just knew we were overlooking something."

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"We haven't had any breakfast," replied Jimmie.

"That's a thing we can easily fix," Frank laughed. "I'll go light up the coils, and you boys get the ham and eggs and potatoes and coffee ready, and we'll have a meal that will look like a Broadway lobster palace in about fifteen minutes."

"Speaking of lobster palaces," Frank said whimsically, "how would you like to walk into one of them right about now?"

"Yes," answered Harry, "we could pay five dollars apiece for the lobster, and give the hat checker a dollar, and the doorman a dollar, and tip the chauffeur two dollars more."

"If I had my way," Jimmie declared, "I'd tip those beats out into the street. They make more money than a short-card gambler."

After breakfast Ned suggested to Frank that they walk up to Crazy range and see if they could discover any indications of the signal apparatus which had been used on the semaphore plan the night before.

"Don't take any bad money while you're gone!" Harry called out as the two boys walked away. "While you're gone, Jimmie and I will rig up an arc light here. We'll need one to read by."

"All right!" Ned called back. "The pole and the lamp and the wire are all there in the machine. Set the pole and string the wire and

we'll help you adjust it when we return."

"If I have my way about it," Jimmie stated, "we'll have that arc light booming before they get back."

"That's what we will!" Harry agreed. "You bring the lamp and the double conductor cable we used on the wireless last night, and I'll set the motors going and manufacture a current that will light the country clear to Kansas City."

While Harry was fishing the lamp out of the car he came upon a jar of strained honey. He held it up to Jmmie with a laugh.

"Don't it make you hungry?" he asked.

"You bet it does!" Jimmie answered. "Bring it over here to the tent and I'll cut some bread and we'll have a feast."

"That's the idea!" Harry exclaimed. "But we'll carry the cable over first, and the lamp, and we can be eating honey while we're tinkering with electricity," he added smacking his lips.

"That'll be fine," Jimmie declared. "Set the motors going and throw me a pair of rubber gloves. Of course the cable's insulated, but there's no use taking chances. This juice is hot stuff."

Laying the cable from the dynamo to the tent, bringing the lamp over to the same place, and setting the motors in motion, the boys sat

down to devour their honey and work their experiment.

"Aw, what's the use of this?" Harry said in a moment, "we haven't got the standard up for the lamp yet."

"That requires muscular exertion," Jimmie said with a wink, "and we'll wait until Ned and Frank come back."

The boys cut great slices of bread, spread on honey as thick as it would lie, and for a time paid more attention to their second breakfast than they did to the arc light. In a moment, however, Harry seized Jimmie by the arm with one hand and begun hustling the honey out of sight with the other.

"Hide it!" he whispered. "The boys are coming back. Get it out of sight. This honey is our find."

Jimmie half arose, looked out toward the car and the canvas-covered heap of provisions, and dropped the can of honey to the ground.

"Not on your life!" he cried. "That's a bear."

"Bear, nothing!" answered Harry. "If you want to see bears, you want to go back to the Central Park zoo."

Jimmie dropped the wire and began crawling into the tent.

"All right!" he said scornfully, "perhaps that

thing out there is a blooming Easter lily, but I don't want anything to do with it, just the same. He looks like the real goods to me."

And indeed it was "the real goods," for the next moment a huge, shambling bear, doubtless attracted by the smell of the honey, slouched into the open space between the tents and the motor car and began sniffing at the provisions. His little round eyes looked red and hungry, and his claws rattled on the ground like bones in the hands of an end man at a minstrel show.

"Have you got your gun?" asked Harry in a whisper.

"I have not," was the reply. "I left it in the car. Have you got yours? We ought to get him from here without any trouble."

"If we get him from here," replied Harry, "we'll have to bring him down with the English language. My gun is in the car, too."

"And that means," Jimmie grinned, "that when Bruin eats up a ton or two of provisions, he'll come here and make pie of us."

"How'd you like to see Ned coming over the hill now?" Harry asked with a chuckle.

"Oh, I wouldn't mind," Jimmie answered. "Do you notice how long my hair is? It's sticking straight up, isn't it?"

"You bet it is!" Harry replied, "and mine feels that way, too."

The bear, after snuffing at the provision heap for a moment and not finding anything open for his use, turned towards the motor car and began inspecting the moving machinery.

"I wish he'd get his snout in there!" Jimmie suggested.

But the bear had no intention of risking his snout in the glistening machinery. Instead, he turned toward the tent where the boys sat and looked them over with hungry eyes. They drew farther into the tent.

"Gee!" Jimmie declared, "I'm scared stiff!"

"He smells the honey!" suggested Harry. "Suppose we throw it out to him. Perhaps he'll eat it and go away."

The boys watched the bear for a moment, drawing back as he approached the tent. Then Jimmie gave Harry a tremendous whack on the back and let out a yell which caused the bear to pause in amazement.

Harry took a look at his chum and found him making faces at the bear.

"Keep that up!" the boy cried. "Keep it up! If anything will frighten the bear, it's that mug of yours."

"Never you mind that mug!" Jimmie laughed. "I've got an idea. How would you like roast bear for supper?"

"I don't care about bear for supper, but I'd

like to see that fellow roasted," Harry answered. "What's this great idea?"

"You just wait a minute and see!" Jimmie answered.

He drew on his rubber gloves and picked up the end of the cable, which lay in front of the tent and started to crawl out.

"Come back here, you little monkey!" cried Harry. "That bear will make about two bites of you. Come on back!"

But Jimmie did not return to the tent. With the highly charged cable in his hand, he continued to crawl out. Harry grinned when he saw the boy taunting the bear with a wrinkled nose.

"Now, kid," Jimmie said as he reached the outside of the tent, "you make a hole in that loaf of bread, pour in about half the honey, and throw it to me. I'm going to give Bruin a free lunch."

"It looks to me just like you were going to give him a free lunch," replied Harry. "We'll feed the honey to the bear and that may hold him until Ned comes back. There's nothing very funny about this situation."

"Funny?" repeated Jimmie. "It's the funniest thing I ever heard of! You've heard people talk about bears dancing, haven't you?"

"You bet I have!" answered Harry.

"Well," said Jimmie, "I'm the only original and exclusive bear charmer in the world. Now just watch me. When I step up to the bear and lift my finger and say the magic word, he'll dance."

"You're a blithering idiot!" shouted Harry. "Come back."

The boy, however, threw the bread and honey out to the bear and Bruin growled his acknowledgment. His attention was now all occupied by the sweet feast which lay under his nose.

"Good bear! Good bear!" laughed Jimmie holding up his hand in imitation of the animal trainers on the stage. "Now when I run three times around you, bear, and say the magic word, you dance the turkey trot."

"He'll dance on your frame first thing you know!" shouted Harry.

"Will he?" Jimmie called back. "Will he dance on my frame? He'll be eating out of my hand in just about a minute."

Greatly to the dismay of his chum, Jimmie now stepped up to the bear, which was now too busy with the honey to pay any attention to him, and circled him three times, whimsically shouting "Presto!" at each round.

Harry almost fell back in a fit. Bruin felt the cable drawing about him, and probably

suspecting that an effort was being made to tie him up, he seized the cable between his teeth and bit savagely. The first snap passed through the insulation, of course, and then—as Jimmie afterwards expressed it—it was time to send in a general alarm for the fire department.

The step-up transformer being on, somewhere near five hundred volts of electricity passed from the cable into the jaws of the bear. It seemed to Harry that he went nine feet and a half into the air. He tried to release his jaws from the cable, but of course did not succeed. His powerful frame swayed back and forth, right and left, and in his great agony he succeeded in overcoming the current long enough to rear himself on his hind feet half a dozen times.

"There!" shouted Jimmie, dancing around the suffering animal, "didn't I tell you he'd do the turkey trot when I said the magic word?"

"Je-rusalem!" shouted Harry. "I should think he was doing the turkey trot! Do you think that will kill him?"

"Kill him!" repeated Jimmie. "He's dead now only he doesn't know it. He's electrocuted in the interest of human life. If we leave him connected with that cable a few minutes more we'll have roast bear for supper. I guess that'll be going some, won't it?"

The current was now actually scorching the

hair and flesh of the bear, and a nauseating odor of burning flesh came to the nostrils of the boys. All muscular action had now ceased, and the bear lay still on the ground. Jimmie ceased his capering long enough to shut off the current.

"You see how it is in this glorious climate of Montana," he said. "If you want bear meat for supper, you don't have to go after the bear. The bear will come to you. Great country, this!"

"You blooming idiot!" laughed Harry. "How did you ever come to think of a trick like that?"

"It was the only thing to do!" laughed Jimmie.

CHAPTER X

A SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE

When Ned and Frank returned from their morning's excursion they were amazed to see the bulky form of a grizzly bear lying in front of the campfire. Jimmie and Harry sat near the tent, regarding the bear triumphantly and disposing of bread and honey sandwiches.

"Where did you get it?" asked Ned.

"Did it drop out of the sky?" demanded Frank.

"No," said Jimmie, with a wink. "He came out of the mountains and invited himself to breakfast, and when we gave him home-made bread and honey he dropped dead with heart failure."

Ned picked up the cable, from which the current had been released, and examined the insulation. Then he laughed back at Jimmie.

"He electrocuted himself, did he?" he asked.

"That's just what he did!" Jimmie answered. "I just wrapped the cable around him two or three times while he was busy eating bread and honey, and he showed a vicious temper and bit through it. My son," the boy added turning to Harry, "I've often told you never to exhibit

temper. Here's an illustration of the effects of it. The bear got mad and passed out to the bear heaven."

"How did you ever get the current turned on with the bear between you and the car?" asked Frank.

Then Harry explained just what had taken place, and Ned declared that if the boys hadn't had the luck of the Irish they would both have been eaten alive. Jimmie only laughed.

"But look here!" Ned said gravely. "You boys were in nearly as much danger from the cable as you were from the bear. There was enough electricity in that wire to kill a hundred men, and you had it out here on the ground experimenting with it! If you ever do a thing of that sort again, I'll send you back to New York immediately."

"That will do for you!" Jimmie answered. "We don't want any more rag-chewing about it. I know you like to talk to me for my own good, but if you don't cut it out you'll not get any of this bear meat."

"We're going to have bear steak for dinner!" Harry shouted.

"It seems to me," Frank suggested, looking at the burned fur about the creature's nose, "that this bear is pretty well cooked now."

"Well," said Jimmie, "we're going to take

his hide off directly, and cure it with salt—you know the way the Indians do it. Then we'll cook a haunch of bear meat as big as a bushel basket—anyway, as big as we can get into our oven."

"We should have had the hide off and the haunch cooking long before this," Harry put in, "only we wanted you to see the bear just as he dropped dead. It would have done you good if you could have sized him up as he danced. He did the turkey trot right, didn't he, Jimmie?"

After the explanations had been made, the hide was removed from the bear and rubbed thoroughly with salt, after which it was rolled up in more salt to season it. After this, it would be hung in the open air to dry out before being smoked. Pelts treated in this way are often better preserved than those handled after more scientific methods.

The great haunch of meat, after being prepared and trimmed down, completely filled the oven. As the boys knew that it would take a long time to cook thoroughly, they had broiled steak for dinner.

"You haven't told us a thing about what you found out this morning," Jimmie said, while dinner was in progress. "Did you find those slender arms of polished steel you were talking about last night?"

"We did not," Frank replied. "There is nothing of the kind there. We found a place where it looked as if posts or timbers had been set in cairns of rock, but nothing to show the use of electricity."

"Well, they used it all right," Harry said. "They had electricity on Crazy mountain, and they had it on the railroad right of way. The thing for us to do now is to find their dynamo. Don't you see," he went on, "that the dynamo points the way to the whole gang? Once we get our eyes on that, we shall only have to wait for the robbers to come and take care of it. They'll come in time, sure enough!"

"That's what Frank and I were talking about," Ned interrupted, "but the first thing to do is to find a wire leading somewhere."

"No wire, no dynamo!" Jimmie laughed.

"That's just as true as anything you ever said," Ned replied. "One little wire might lead us to the solution we seek."

"And another thing," Frank stated, "is that we want to find out about Hughes and his two companions. We don't know whether they're crooks or not. We only suspect they are, and you can't hang a man on suspicion."

"Well," Harry said, "the only way to find out about the gentlemen is to discover whether they really have a shack in the mountains or

not. If they have a shack there, and are living in it, and there are no electrical attachments around it, we have a good many guesses coming concerning them."

"There's one thing I can't understand," Ned observed, "and that is why the three men didn't show up when the train stopped in the canyon. There was certainly plenty of noise there, noise enough to wake the dead. First the pilot engine went shooting through, then the heavy specie train came on, and then the pilot engine backed up in order that the armed men might be available in case the specie train was attacked, and then both engines stood there panting and puffing as if expressing their disgust with mountain service. The men must have heard what was going on, and yet their curiosity did not lead them to investigate. It looks to me like they were hiding."

"Perhaps they were afraid of being recognized by some of the train men!" suggested Jimmie.

"That's the idea I was trying to express," said Ned. "It seems to me that perfectly innocent men would not lose the chance of being present at an attempted hold-up in the mountains."

"Then the next thing to do," Frank suggested, "is to travel over this country from stem to gudgeon and find the shack Hughes talks about.

These men don't look like train robbers, and they may be out for a vacation just as we are."

"Just as we are—not!" declared Jimmie. "We're Boy Scout Electricians, we are, and we're in the employ of Uncle Sam's Secret Service department, and we're going to land these train robbers just as we landed the bear."

"You can't get these train robbers to bite through the insulation of a double conductor cable!" laughed Ned.

At the conclusion of the meal Ned and Jimmie, after supplying themselves with automatics and searchlights, took their way down the river. They stood for a moment at the junction of Lost Horse creek with the Musselshell river, looking across at the broken country to the north.

"If we only had a boat!" Ned said. "We've got to get over into that country in some way."

"Look here!' Jimmie said. "That man Hughes must have had a boat. He came from this way. I wish we could find it.'

"If he had a boat at all," Ned answered, "it must be on the other side of the stream."

"Give me the high sign," grinned Jimmie, "and I'll swim across and see if I can find it. He probably didn't carry it into the hills with him.'

"Do you remember," Ned said thoughtfully,

"exactly where you found that railroad motor?"

"Sure I do!" laughed the boy

"Well," Ned went on, "the construction gang that left the motor also left the ruins of an old shanty. This road was completed not so very long ago, and the men who built it didn't gather up their implements and lumber as they should. If you know where that place is, we'll go back and see if we can find lumber enough to build a scow."

"You bet we can!" declared Jimmie. "We've got nails and saws and hammers and left-handed monkey wrenches, and everything needed to do good carpenter work right in the belly of the good old Scout. We can build a boat in a quarter of the time it took Noah to build the ark."

The boys lost no time in getting up the line to the place where the railroad motor had been found. There they discovered a dozen or more fairly well preserved pine planks.

"We can't lug these back to the camp," Jimmie said, "so I'll go and get the railroad motor and give 'em a ride."

About half of the afternoon was spent in the manufacture of a boat. It wasn't exactly a beauty, as Jimmie declared, but it was fairly light and waterproof When completed, it was launched in Lost Horse creek, and then Ned and

Jimmie crossed the Musselshell river.

"It seems to me," Ned laughed as they paddled across the stream, "that we might have waded this little run and saved a whole lot of time."

"We've got more time than anything else," Jimmie replied with one of his inimitable grins.

Secreting the boat which was promptly named the "Bear," in a little cove, the boys proceeded into the foothills.

"I think," Ned said, examining the ground closely as he walked along, "that we're on the right track. Anyway, there's quite a little path leading back from the river."

"If the country keeps on going up," Jimmie declared, "we'll soon have to get a ladder or a flying machine."

The boys climbed a rocky surface, using both hands and feet in the ascent, until they came to a summit which overlooked a narrow valley to the north. Through the valley ran, like a thread of silver, a small mountain stream which found its outlet farther to the east. The north wall of the valley was rocky and precipitous.

"Right over there," Jimmie suggested, "is about where those fellows would be apt to build their shack if they built any at all. The ridge we have just crossed would protect them from the view of those on the railroad, and they might

live in there for years without their presence ever being known."

The boys passed down the slope leading to the valley, crossed the mountain creek, and began climbing up the north wall.

"We ought to discover something after all this!" panted Jimmie.

Directly they came to a shoulder of the cliff which broke sharply away to the east and west. They then cautiously made their way on their hands and knees, crawling over projections where a move of a foot to the right or left meant death, until they came to what looked like a pathway cut into the rocky side of the cliff wall.

"There's some one lives hereabouts, all right," Jimmie panted, wiping the sweat from his streaming forehead. "No wild animal ever cut this path!"

Up the faint path they stumbled, Ned always a few feet ahead of Jimmie. Directly a misstep of the latter's sent a splinter of rock bounding and crashing down the precipice. It fell into the creek below with a mighty splash. Both boys stopped instantly and crouched down behind a great boulder which split the path and around which the way had been in a measure smoothed.

"That noise was probably heard over in St. Louis!" Jimmie whispered. "If we lay right

here and wait, we may see some one come out to find out what caused it."

The boys lay flat on their stomachs, hands clasping the shelf of rock for some time, listening. But they heard only the dash of the water below and the call of the birds in the sky. After a time Ned left the shelter of the rock and sliding back looked over the valley. There was no one in sight. He moved forward again to his old shelter.

"Come on, Jimmie!" he said. "We'll get to the top of this ridge and see what we can find."

There was no reply, and Ned peered around the rock to see if Jimmie had gone to sleep. To his surprise, Jimmie was not there.

The boy looked up and down the path, but his chum was nowhere to be seen. He certainly had not gone down, for he could not have done so without encountering Ned. It did not seem possible that he could have ascended the steep pathway to the summit above without attracting the attention of his companion.

It seemed to Ned as if the walls had opened and hidden the boy from view. In order to make sure, he laboriously slid back to the hog's-back ridge and looked down the precipices on either side.

"The boy might possibly have followed along behind me and fallen," Ned mused. "Still,

in that case, I should have heard the sound of the fall. It must be that he has gone on to the summit."

As Ned climbed, the trail grew more precipitous. Some distance below there had been places where he could stand upright, but now it was altogether a matter of crawling.

He reached the summit at last, however, and looked over into another valley. The rocky summit of the elevation lay exposed to right and left. No human being was in sight.

For a time Ned could not believe that Jimmie had not purposely disappeared in order to carry out some prankish notion. But at length he reached the conclusion that the boy had been taken away by force.

But where had he been taken? How had his captors been able to get him away without attracting his own attention? It was all a great puzzle.

From the point where the passageway up which Ned had climbed reached the summit of the ridge, another faintly outlined pathway led down into the valley. After some moments of thought, Ned took this path and scrambled down. In a moment he swept the slope down which he had traveled with his eyes in search of a cavern or other hiding place.

What he saw convinced him that the boy's disappearance had not been voluntary.

CHAPTER XI

COMPANY TO SUPPER

In the meantime Frank and Harry, at the camp, amused themselves setting the pole designed to hold the arc light and arranging for the connection with the dynamo. The remainder of the afternoon after the departure of Ned and Jimmie passed quickly away, but when night came the little camp was illuminated by as brilliant a light as ever shone on the Great White Way. They had plenty of power and a large arc lamp, so there was nothing to prevent having all the light they wanted.

"There!" Frank laughed as the light flashed out over cliff and river and thicket. "When the boys see that, they'll hurry home just to enjoy it. It will give them an impression that they're approaching little old Manhattan island, and that will make Jimmie hungry."

"It's a wonder they don't come!" worried Frank. "If they don't get here pretty soon, that roast will be overdone."

Harry went to the oven, opened the door, and sniffed the fragrance of the cooking haunch.

"If Jimmie ever got his nostrils connected

with that," he declared, "he'd come home on the run."

"Anyway," Frank went on, "we'll have to take it out of the oven and let it cool."

The boys made their supper principally off the roast, and then laid it away in a cold air refrigerator in the motor car. Then they lay down under the electric light and listened and waited.

"What did they go away for, anyhow?" asked Harry in a moment.

"They went away to look for the three men who may be robbers or may be gentlemen," Frank replied.

"Well, they didn't have to go clear to San Francisco to find out, did they?" demanded Harry. "They've been gone long enough to get there."

"They've been gone too long," Frank admitted, "and I'm getting nervous."

"Well, then," Harry responded, "suppose we we go out and look for them. They may be lost in the hills."

"Hopeless case!" replied the other. "We couldn't find them in a thousand years! All we can do is just stay here and wait."

"We're always waiting for that little monkey of a Jimmie!" Harry grumbled. "The next time he gets away from this camp, I'm going

to send a brass band with him. He got lost on the Amazon, and on the Columbia, and on the Colorado, and on the wrong side of the Arctic Circle! And now, I presume," he went on, "he's gone and got Ned lost, too!"

Frank laid back on the ground and laughed.

"You're almost as big a kicker as Jack Bosworth," he said. "Jimmie may be lost, but he's out with Ned, and Ned will bring him back. Don't you ever forget that. Ned does things!"

At nine o'clock Frank arose from his place by the fire and announced that he was going to bed. Harry regarded him with amazement.

"I suppose," he said, "you can go right to sleep with Ned and Jimmie lost in the mountains, and this arc light beckoning to all the robbers in the hills to come up and help themselves to our supplies?"

"Sure, I can go right to sleep," Frank answered, "and if you have any sense left, you'll do the same thing. Nearly all the trouble which kept me awake nights never happened."

"Go on, then," grinned Harry. "I'm going to sit by the fire a little while and see if they come back. Here they come now!" he added, "rolling and tumbling over the stones between here and Lost Horse creek!"

Frank turned away from the tent and joined Harry by the fire again. The footsteps to which

Harry had referred were now very plainly heard, and directly two figures stepped out into the ring of light under the arc.

The boys were about to spring forward in welcome after their long suspense, but in a second they discovered that the newcomers were not the lads they were expecting. One of the men advancing to meet them was Hughes and the other was a dark-faced fellow they had not seen before.

"Good evening!" Frank said as cheerfully as his anxiety would permit. "We're glad to see you. We rather expected you earlier in the evening."

Hughes glanced keenly about the camp, and Frank thought that he smiled grimly as he noticed the absence of Ned and Jimmie.

"Where are the others?" he asked after introducing his companion as Rowell. "I called particularly to see Mr. Nestor."

"Ned and Jimmie have gone out for a walk," Frank answered.

"Well," Hughes said hesitatingly, "I can come again in the morning, I presume. Kindly tell Ned, as you call him, that I have something to say to him. I'll call tomorrow if I possibly can."

"I hope you're not going away yet!" Harry exclaimed. "If you sit down here by the fire,

we'll give you broiled bear steak and coffee."

"That would be something of a treat!" Rowell exclaimed. "I have half a mind to accept that invitation."

"We ought not to overlook the opportunity of getting bear steak," laughed Hughes, "and you boys certainly do make fine coffee."

So Frank cut great slices of steak from the bear, and in a short time, they were broiling over the electric coils on the motor car. Over another coil, coffee was soon steaming fragrantly.

The two men followed Frank out to the motor car and stood looking over its mechanism while the steak broiled.

"That is some car you have there," Rowell observed, as his keen eyes took in every detail of the Scout. "When I get back to the city I think I'll have one built after that pattern."

"It can do everything but sing the Star Spangled Banner," laughed Frank, "and we're thinking of fitting it out with a talking machine."

Frank hastened the cooking of the steaks as much as possible because he did not like the furtive look in Rowell's eyes.

The fellow seemed to be studying the machine to its minutest details. When they were all back by the campfire again, Frank took occasion to whisper to Harry:

"Those fellows never came here to make a

social call! They came to find out whether Ned and Jimmie were back, and, probably, to size up the Scout. One of us ought to sit by the car with loaded guns tonight."

"We'll both be on watch if Ned and Jimmie don't come back," Harry suggested. "I wish these fellows would hurry up and get away. I don't like the situation here at all."

But the men seemed to be in no hurry to take their departure. They ate their steak slowly, drank enormous quantities of coffee, and laughed and chatted with the boys as if they had the whole week before them. At last, however, when the hands of Frank's watch pointed to eleven o'clock, they arose and bade the lads good night.

"Good night!" Frank called after them as they disappeared in the darkness.

"Not good night, but au revoir!" suggested Harry in an undertone.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Frank.

"I mean," Harry answered, "that those fellows know where Ned and Jimmie are. Didn't you notice the satisfied smiles on their faces as they glanced around the camp? Why, that man Rowell looked like he owned the Scout already as he stood looking at it. Don't you ever think those fellows will let us sleep in peace tonight."

"If I thought they knew where Ned and Jim-

mie were," Frank said, "I'd chase on after them. They might lead us straight to the robbers' nest."

"That's another brilliant idea!" Harry exclaimed. "Do you suppose the little Boy Scout we picked up on the track could watch the Scout if we went away?"

"Say," laughed Frank, "I'd almost forgotten about that kid. I don't believe we gave him any supper, did we?'

"We did not," was the reply. "I looked in the tent once or twice and he was sound asleep, as he has been nearly all the time he's been with us. If you leave it to me, that kid has had a pretty rough time."

"Well," Frank suggested, moving toward the tent where the wounded boy lay, "I'll go see what he says about standing guard for a little while."

"Whatever you do," Harry urged, "do it quick, for those fellows are getting farther away every minute. Tell you what you do," the boy continued, "you rig up a bunk right there in the tonneau of the Scout, down on the floor and not on the seats, and put the kid in it. Give him two automatics and he'll do the rest. Tell him to shoot to kill if any one comes near the machine."

"That's the idea!" Frank said. "And while

I'm doing that, you trail on after those two men. I can follow you all right for you won't be as far away as they are likely to be before I get started."

Harry dashed away in the direction taken by the men whose footsteps were still heard in the direction of the river.

"If they've got a boat down there," the boy muttered to himself, "I'll have to swim, and Frank can't follow a water trail very handily!"

After Harry's departure Frank awoke the injured boy, who had given his name as Chester, and proposed the plan suggested by Harry.

"Sure I can watch the car!" the boy declared. "I was almost dead for want of sleep when you found me, and so I've been pretty sleepy ever since that time, but now I'm all right. I reckon you boys must have had experience in setting legs before."

"Sure thing we have," replied Frank. "If you had been conscious when we set your leg, you'd have seen that we had the regulation splints and bandages. Every Boy Scout is taught to give first aid to the injured, although some of them forget their lessons too soon."

"Well," Chester answered, "help me to get over to the car and give me the guns. I'll see that no one meddles with the Scout tonight."

After seeing that the boy was comfortable in

the tonneau, and that he was well armed, Frank hastened off in the direction taken by Harry.

He found him in a short time, standing not far from the bank of the river. Hughes and Rowell seemed to be standing on the margin of the stream trying to decide some important question which they were discussing.

Harry siezed his chum by the arm as he came up and pointed out to the river.

"Those fellows are waiting for a boat to come after them," he said. "They were rowed over from the other side, and now they are waiting for one of their companions to bring back the boat."

"I wonder if they used the boat we built this afternoon?" queried Frank. "If they did, that proves the point that they have interfered with Ned and Jimmie."

"I wish the other boys were here." Harry grumbled. "We'd knock these fellows stiff and tie 'em up."

"That would be a fine trick!" Frank scoffed. "It would bring the whole band of hold-up men down on us. I'll tell you this right now, my son," he went on, "if we ever see Ned and Jimmie again, we've got to trail these fellows to the place where they've hid them."

"All right!" Harry replied. "That's what

we're out here for, and there comes the boat splashing through the river."

The boys could now hear the sound of a paddle and directly the rumble of voices. Directly, the men they were following stepped into the boat, as they knew by the clatter of heavy shoes on the planking, and the craft was started across the river.

"There's nothing aristocratic about me," Harry said as the boat disappeared from view, "when I can't ride, I can swim. We'll chase up to the west a short distance so as to have the benefit of the current in crossing. By the time that boat gets across, we'll be on the other shore, with dry guns unless the waterproof covers leak."

CHAPTER XII

TWO UNDER A CANVAS

If Jimmie, walking quietly down crowded Broadway on a summer morning, had been seized by the collar and lifted to the top of the Flatiron building, he could not have been more amazed than he was that afternoon on his way to the summit of the second ridge.

When Ned left the shelter they shared together to look over the valley they had crossed, Jimmie started slowly up the rocky declivity leading to the summit, his intention being to get a glimpse of the valley which must lie only a short distance to the north.

The way was steep, and the boy pressed upward on his hands and knees. He had proceeded only a few paces, however, when he felt himself seized by the collar. His jacket and shirt tightened under the strain from the hand behind, and the boy tried in vain to call out.

His next effort was to send a rock tumbling down the incline in order to attract Ned's attention. But this was rendered impossible by his being lifted from his feet and hustled, on a pair of muscular shoulders, rapidly up the incline which he had been climbing with such difficulty.

Suffering intensely from lack of breath, Jimmie clutched fiercely at his captor and tried to snatch away the arm which now assisted his straining garments in the choking process.

"Just a moment, kid!" a voice said in his ear. "We'll turn your pipes loose in a minute. You see," the voice added, "you might make trouble for us both if you let out a screech now."

Even as the voice ceased, the grasp on Jimmie's throat relaxed a trifle, and he felt the fresh, pure mountain air sweeping into his lungs. He was still incapable of speech but, the suffering gone, he was able to take note of what was going on. He saw that the man who was carrying him was not walking up the steep ascent at all, but was being drawn up by a rope looped under his shoulders.

Although the rope was drawn swiftly along, as if turning on a huge drum, the boy could see no power which gave it motion. The distant end dropped over the summit at the end of the path, and that appeared to be the last of it. In a very short time the boy was carried to the top.

In fact, had Ned given his attention to the summit at the instant of his return to the boulder, he would have seen Jimmie and his captor disappearing over the ridge.

After passing over the summit the boy's captor stood him on his feet on a level shelf and

faced him humorously. The captor was a short, muscular man, very broad across the shoulders and rather slender across the hips. His arms were long and muscular, while his legs were were short and did not seem to be particularly well developed.

The fellow stood about five feet in height. His face was well featured and Jimmie noted that his eyes were not especially vicious.

"Well, kid," the fellow said, "how do you like our mountain elevator service?"

"It makes me think of the elevator in Busy Izzy's hotel," replied Jimmie, speaking with considerable effort on account of the injured condition of his vocal chords.

"Right smart play that Busy Izzy!" grinned the captor. "Some day, if you behave yourself, you and me may see it together."

"What I want to know just now," Jimmie said, "is what you geezled me in that way for"

"Because," was the laughing reply, "we men of the mountains are in need of polite society!"

"I should think so!" grumbled Jimmie.

"My name is Stearns," the captor said, "and I'm out here in the mountains for my health."

"Yes," Jimmie answered, "I've heard that the atmosphere of penitentiaries is not conducive to good health."

"That's the idea," admitted Stearns, evi-

dently not at all displeased with the observation. "That's just the idea."

"Well," said Jimmie in a moment, "what's the idea now?"

"First," began Stearns, "let me ask you if that friend of yours, Ned Nestor, is inclined to be at all inquisitive?"

"You bet he is!" Jimmie answered. "His bump of curiosity is so big that he has to wear an extra hat on it, and he'll want to know right away what has become of me."

"Well," Stearns said pleasantly, "then perhaps we'd better be moving. Just now we don't care to interfere with this Secret Service chum of yours. In fact," he continued, "if you behave yourself, he need never be molested at all."

"What's the answer?" asked Jimmie.

Instead of replying to the question Stearns tossed the boy on his broad back as if he had been a doll and half slid, half walked down the declivity, keeping to the left in a diagonal direction instead of following straight down toward the bottom of the valley.

It seemed to Jimmie that the man dropped down precipices and leaped over chasms which no human being should have undertaken but, in spite of the haste and recklessness with which the two proceeded, the man came in safety,

presently, to a shelf of rock which lay like a smooth balcony below a towering cliff a score of yards in height.

Here Jimmie was placed on his feet again, after being warned to remain perfectly still. Then to his astonishment Stearns pushed aside, crumpled up two sections of rock and stepped into a dark cavern! The fellow laughed when he saw the astonishment exhibited on Jimmie's face.

"It does look like rock, doesn't it?" he said, lifting a heavy canvas which had been painted in imitation of the rocky face of the cliff. "Yes sir," he continued, "you may go down below and look up at this wall when the curtains are drawn and you'd swear it was all rock."

"I suppose," Jimmie grunted, "you fellows make bum whiskey or bad money or something of that sort in here."

"Not on your life," grinned the other. "That is our summer home. When we get tired of Broadway and Clark street, we just naturally head for the mountains."

Without further explanation Jimmie was lead into the interior of a cavern which seemed to him to be as large as that of the old Academy of Music in New York. The place seemed to contain all conveniences for housekeeping. On one side was a great kitchen range, still showing the embers of a recent fire. Tables, couches,

chairs and beds were scattered about the vast room in great confusion.

"You see," Stearns explained, "we have accommodations for summer boarders. You are the first one to come so far this season. Now, the first one always enters our delightful little home under peculiar conditions. For instance, he has to consent to every proposal we make to him, and answer every question we ask him honestly and fully, or he never leaves the place alive."

"Which means that you are a band of murderers!" Jimmie said.

"Which means that we are people who look out for ourselves," Stearns corrected. "If we should turn you loose you'd have a regiment of officers on our backs as soon as they could get here."

"You bet I would!" answered Jimmie. "If I had a stick of dynamite right now I'd blow the top off this mountain."

"You needn't go to all that trouble," Stearns smiled. "All you've got to do is to answer a few questions right and we'll let you go."

"Get a-going then," Jimmie said.

"We want to know what you boys have discovered since your arrival here. Tell the truth now."

"I'm the only one that has made any discovery," Jimmie answered.

"Well, what have you discovered?"

"A cavern inhabited by a band of train robbers!"

"Who put up the wireless?" asked Stearns.

"I don't know anything about any wireless!" was the reply.

"Who notified Miles City of the danger to the specie train?"

Jimmie shook his head.

"Do you mean that you don't know?" asked Stearns.

The boy remained stubbornly silent.

"I see how it is," Stearns went on still patiently. "I know what you boys are here for and what you are doing. I know why your motor car was brought in here with a dynamo big enough to light a city."

"Then, if you know so much, what's the use of asking questions?" asked the boy. "Oh, you make me tired!"

"You are an impudent little chap, anyway!" Stearns declared, "but I rather like your spirit. Now let me tell you why you have been brought here. We men of the hills are about ready to give up the life we have been leading. In fact we have about all the money we'll ever need. What we want now is to make one more decided

haul and leave the United States forever.

"If you boys had not butted in we would have made the haul last night, when the specie train came through. Now, we might have destroyed your machine so as to render interference with the wires impossible, or we might have shot you down as you sat in the light of your campfire.

"But we are not making war against boys, especially bright boys like you. Now, what we want you to do is to arrange with your companions to get out of this district immediately. There will be a pay car through here in a day or two, and we'll help ourselves to what she will carry. Then we'll disappear. In fact, most of us have disappeared already. You and I are the last persons to visit this cavern, so far as I know. My companions, owing to your interference, have already sought other quarters.

"I shouldn't think you'd be afraid of a lot of boys," Jimmie suggested.

"We are not afraid of a lot of boys," was the reply. "We are trying to save the lives of a lot of boys. We are going to get this pay car and disappear. That ought to satisfy you. Now will you convey the information I have given you to your friends and induce them to give up this amateur detective undertaking?"

"They wouldn't give it up!" Jimmie declared.

"Would you advise them to give it up?" asked Stearns.

"I would not," answered Jimmie.

"Then the negotiations seem to be at an end," said Stearns not unkindly, "and I'll send down and capture the other members of your party sometime tonight. Also, we'll destroy your electrical apparatus in order that the betrayal of last night may not be repeated."

"And what are you going to do with the boys after you catch them all?" asked Jimmie.

"That depends," was the unsatisfactory reply. "They may be placed where they can't interfere with our plans until we get out of the country, or they may be packed away so they will never interfere with anybody's plans again."

"You're a cheerful kind of a fellow to do business with!" Jimmie declared.

Apparently weary of the useless argument, Stearns gave a low whistle and a heavy-featured, dark-browed man made his appearance, coming evidently from a side cavern.

"Watch this fellow, Tom," Stearns ordered. "I'll go out after the rest. Don't let him escape, whatever you do."

Stearns disappeared, and Tom stationed himself like a watch dog at the entrance to the cavern. Jimmie understood that Ned would be searching for him in that vicinity, and at

once set his mind to work to discover some means by which his chum might be informed of his whereabouts.

While Jimmie studied over the problem Tom arose from his chair at the entrance to the cavern and proceeded to adjust the painted canvas arranged to conceal the opening. This canvas was suspended from a rod which crossed the mouth of the cavern just out of sight, swinging like a set of portierres when it became necessary to shift its position.

As the man pulled at the curtain, one section of it dropped upon his shoulders. Jimmie, quick to see the possible assistance to himself involved in the incident, sprang upon the fellow and twisted the canvas closer and closer about his figure.

In the struggle, the supporting pole gave way and the entire mass, heavy with the paint which had been used upon it, tumbled down upon the struggling figures. Angry and impatient at what had taken place, Tom threw out his arms to clear the obstruction away from his face. As he did so Jimmie drew the curtain close with a violent jerk and rolled it round and round until the man was sheathed up in the heavy canvas like a mummy.

The fellow continued to struggle, but as long as Jimmie kept rolling him over and over he was

unable to disentangle himself from the canvas. At last, wearied with his exertions, and seeing that the man's arms and legs were absolutely secure in the enveloping cloth, the boy sat down upon his animated bundle and considered the situation gravely.

Other members of the band might arrive at any moment, so the boy understood that whatever he did must be done quickly. He knew that if he left his prisoner, even swathed as he was, he would soon work his release by rolling over the floor so as to unwind the canvas.

It was at this moment that Ned glanced up from below and observed Jimmie sitting tossed about on the struggling outlaw like a boat upon an uncertain sea. As may well be understood, Ned lost no time in bounding up the declivity and reaching the shelf from which the cavern opened. Jimmie welcomed his appearance with a grin.

CHAPTER XIII

A Night of Anxiety

Serious as the situation was Ned could not restrain a chuckle as he saw Jimmie swayed about on the struggling canvas. Oaths and epithets innumerable were coming from the agitated roll, and Jimmie was grinning up at him as if enjoying the situation.

"Have you got a bear in there?" Ned asked hastily.

"Train robber!" panted Jimmie.

"And this cavern?" asked Ned swinging a hand toward the interior.

"This is where they live," replied Jimmie, "and if we don't get out of here mighty quick, we're liable to have a lot of them climbing on top of us."

Ned cut wide, long strips from the canvas and tied the bobbing bundle up securely.

"Can you breathe now?" Jimmie asked peering in at the end of the roll where the man's head lay.

A burst of profanity proclaimed that the man at least retained possession of his vocal organs.

"All right!" Jimmie said. "If you've got wind enough to talk like that, you've got wind

enough to sustain life. Come on, Ned."

It was a fortunate thing for the boys that twilight had fallen while the events just narrated had been taking place in the cavern. When they slid recklessly off the shelf of rock carrying stones and dirt with them in their headlong passage, they dropped into a depression almost as dark as a pocket.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jimmie, "I guess I've got about ten legs broken!'

"Can you walk?" asked Ned.

"Can I walk!" repeated Jimmie. "Put me on a level surface and I'll beat the Wolverine."

The boy was about to continue the conversation when Ned laid a hand on his arm.

"Now listen!" he said. "Half a dozen outlaws seem to have come to the rescue of that mummy friend of yours. At least I heard excited conversation up there only a second ago. Now, the chances are that they have electricity in that cave. If they have, they'll turn a searchlight on this slope."

"Je-rusalem!" shouted Jimmie. "Can you stand a drop of another thousand feet?"

"I think so," Ned replied making his way out of the depression into which the two had fallen.

The night was falling fast, and the valley to the west of the ridge was now in darkness. When the boys reached the rim of the little pit

they could only see a long, steep slope lying dimly before them.

"We've got to take it!" Ned whispered. "There is no other way."

And so, sliding, rolling, falling, now on their stomachs, now on their backs, the boys came at last to the bottom of the rise.

"I wouldn't mind a fall from the top of the Flatiron building after that!" Jimmie declared ruefully.

"We're at the bottom at all events," Ned said, "for I can feel grass under my hands."

In a moment they both turned and looked up to the shelf which they had left so precipitously. There was a faint glow of light at the entrance, as if a fire had been kindled somewhere in the interior.

Revealed by the faint illumination were the figures of three men. The boys could not, of course, distinguish their faces, but Jimmie recognized the man who had taken him captive by his short yet bulky frame.

"This makes me think of some of the acts I've seen on the stage where they use foolish houses for sudden disappearances," Jimmie laughed. "You know how it is, Ned," he went on, "when one harlequin goes out of the roof another comes in at the chimney. Well, that's the way we got out of the cavern. Those fel-

lows must have showed up about two seconds and a half after we left."

"They don't seem to have a search light," Ned said.

"I don't believe they've got any electricity in there," Jimmie replied, "at least, I saw no wires. What they're doing now is putting that curtain in place which, from their point of view, is very good sense."

"Well," Ned suggested in a moment, "the correct thing for us to do now is to get back into the vicinity of the camp.

"To the camp," corrected Jimmie. "Right plumb into the camp! There isn't a blooming thing for me in the vicinity of the camp!"

"Let me tell you what I'm afraid will happen now," Ned said apprehensively. "Those fellows may rush the camp, capture Frank and Harry, and wait for us to come. Therefore, we mustn't go into the camp at present."

As the reader understands, Ned's prediction concerning the future action of the outlaws was the correct one, only they did not carry out their scheme exactly as suggested by the boy.

As is well known to the reader, Hughes and Rowell did visit the camp shortly after the escape of Jimmie, but not in the spirit predicted by the boy, their object being to discover if the lads had returned.

"Now," Ned went on, we mustn't think of returning to the camp by the route we followed in leaving it. I think this ridge to the south runs out a mile or so to the west. If so, we would better round the face of it and come to the river some distance west of the place where we left the boat.

"That's about it," Jimmie acquiesced. "We can swim the river and come out on the railroad right-of-way and so sneak up to the campfire.

It was a long walk over difficult ground that the boys now faced. Ned dared not use his searchlight for fear that outlaws might be following them, so they stumbled over rocks and tripped into depressions and bruised themselves up generally. When at last, with bleeding fingers and torn clothing, they came to the river, having crossed a succession of foot hills between the valley and the stream, they threw themselves down on the bank to rest.

"Right over there," Ned said, "only a short distance from the other shore is the railroad right-of-way, and just about opposite us is the place where the outlaws strung their signal lamps."

"That doesn't listen good to me," Jimmie answered. "If they've got electrical appliances there, there's someone loafing about. If you leave it to me, we won't put foot to that right-of-way tonight."

"That's just what I was thinking when I spoke as I did regarding the situation across the river," Ned said.

"Well, we can't go down on this side of the river," Jimmie argued, "they'll be waiting for us to come and get our boat."

"That's very true," answered Ned, "but I'll tell you what we can do. We can keep in the bed of the river until we get almost to the camp."

"I knew it!" Jimmie said mournfully. "I knew I'd get soaked before I got out of this! You must think I'm a duck!"

"Because, you see," Ned added, "if we move somewhere near the middle of the stream we can keep a sharp lookout on both banks."

"All right!" Jimmie said. "If anybody shoots at us while we're in the middle of the river, I'll swim under water a few hundred miles. Say!" he added with a slight chuckle, "do you remember that great big haunch of bear meat we put to cooking?'

"I've been thinking of that," Ned answered.

"Well," Jimmie continued, "I'd be willing to swim from Coney Island to Long Branch just to get one good long sniff at that roast bear."

"The only way to get it," laughed Ned, "is to take to the water."

Feeling much refreshed after their short rest, the boys waded courageously out into the head

waters of the Musselshell river. For a long distance the water came only to their waists and it was only on rare occasions that they were obliged to swim at all. The current, however, was swift and the water cold, rushing down as it did from the snow capped mountains to the north and south, so the journey was decidedly the most uncomfortable ever taken by the two lads.

Presently they drew up at a fallen tree which stretched for some distance into the stream, having been washed down by a recent flood, and Ned pointed to the east.

"There!" he said, "do you see the light in the sky? That is where the camp is,"

"It looks to me like the boys had the arc light going," Jimmie replied. "That's one job we won't have to undertake, anyway."

The boys now moved more cautiously keeping close down to the surface of the water as far as possible. It was fortunate that they did so, for directly, when but a short distance above the camp, they heard shouts coming from the north shore, and then, in a moment more, a volley of pistol shots came from the direction of the camp.

"It looks to me," Jimmie said, "like we arrived just in time for the Fourth of July celebration."

In five minutes the boys were at a point in the river about opposite the camp. While they

hesitated as to what course to pursue, two figures came dashing down the steep bank to the left and splashed out into the stream. There was only the light of the stars, but the boys could see pursuers gathering on the bank and after a short pause a boat shot out.

"Its dollars to peanuts," Jimmie whispered, "that Frank and Harry have got themselves into some kind of a scrape."

Without replying Ned struck out to the right and soon landed on the bank only a short distance from the camp.

The firing there had ceased, and the boat he had seen on the river ceased making progress toward the shore and was drifting slowly down stream. The two boys who had entered the water just below them soon came panting to the surface only a few feet from where Ned stood.

"Mermaids!" cried Jimmie.

"Mermaid yourself!" answered Frank. "We saw you come out of the river, too!"

"If we hadn't come out of the river," Jimmie answered, "those fellows would have had you in that boat before this!"

"What was the firing at the camp?" asked Ned in a moment.

"Why," replied Frank, "before we went away to look you up, we left Chester, the wounded Boy Scout, lying on a soft bed in the tonneau,

with instructions to shoot anyone who came to the machine."

"Then the camp has been attacked all right," Ned declared, "and the outlaws may be there yet. It strikes me that we ought not to go over there just now."

The boat on the river was drifting slowly down stream. The figures on the north bank had withdrawn from sight, and no more shots came from the camp.

"I'll tell you what I think," Ned said. "Chester frightened the fellows away from the car, and when we came up out of the river the outlaws who were following Frank and Harry turned back, that is, the ones who did not spring into the boat. My judgment is that the best thing we can do is to reconnoitre the camp."

"As long as that roast bear is there in the oven," Jimmie exclaimed, "you needn't give me any other reason why we ought to move on the camp. I'm hungry enough, right now, to eat the top off one of those hills."

And so, spreading out in the shape of a fan, and moving cautiously, the boys crept towards the camp, not knowing what reception they were to meet with there.

CHAPTER XIV

A CHEERFUL LIAR

Left alone under the strong light of the arc lamp, Sol. Chester, the Boy Scout who had been found on the railroad right-of-way the previous night, lay for a long time listening to the sounds of the night. He was not exactly afraid, and yet the company of the other boys would have been decidedly pleasing just at that time.

He had left his home in Chicago a month before with two other members of the Panther Patrol on a sight-seeing trip through the west. Extravagant, as most boys are inclined to be, the lads found themselves without money, with only half their trip completed.

Chester's companions had turned back at the first indication of hunger and outdoor bedrooms, but Chester had kept on, boy like, riding on trains without buying tickets and, whenever possible, doing odd jobs in the cities and towns he came to in order to provide food.

At last, as usually happens in such cases, the boy's adventurous journey had been brought to a quick and painful close by the shoe of a brutal brakeman, who had thrown him from a swiftly moving train at the point where he had been

found. The boy's parents were in fairly good circumstances in Chicago, but up to this time he had had no intention of writing to them for assistance.

He had left home full of ambition and, too, with the confidence of his father and mother, and now he absolutely refused to admit defeat. Although he was now weak and in pain from the injury he had received, he was more than glad to do anything in return for the hospitality the boys had extended to him.

He was not at all in a fighting mood as he lay in the tonneau surrounded by automatic revolvers that night, yet he knew that should any attack be made on the machine he would shoot on the first indication of danger, and shoot to kill. Whatever happened to him, his friends should be protected. It was in this spirit that the boy heard the first stealthy footstep that night. The sound of the approach came from the darkness in the direction of Crazy range. The steps came on for a moment, then halted and all was still.

At a loss exactly what course to pursue, the boy did nothing at all except crouch lower on the bed in the tonneau and watch and listen, one automatic in his hand and two more within reach.

After a long time the steps came on again.

There was no moon at that time, but the sky was fairly clear of clouds, and the light of the stars showed a dim figure moving just at the edge of an elevation between the motor car and the lower hills of the range.

Outlined against the sky, the figure passed swiftly to the north. In a moment it left the elevation and was seen no more at that time, for the reason that one looking out of a circle of light into the night cannot distinguish objects unless outlined as this had been.

However, Chester understood that the visitor was not there to wander around in the darkness. He was certain that in time the man would approach the car and perhaps attempt to secure possession of it. The boy was in pain, and his head swayed dizzily now and then, but he lay watchful and silent, resolved to end the battle, if once it should be begun, with the first shot, if possible. Directly a voice called from the darkness:

"Hello, boys!"

Chester made no answer at all.

"Are you still there, boys?" the voice came again.

Chester lifted so as to direct a weapon in the direction of the sound, but made no reply. Then the footsteps came stealthily on again.

"I am Rowell," the voice cried. "You might

have seen me here a short time ago with Hughes."

Chester lifted in the tonneau so as to see into the circle of light but could not distinguish the speaker. It will be remembered that he had been asleep in a tent at the time Hughes and Rowell had visited the boys earlier in the evening, therefore he had seen neither of them.

In a moment a figure showed in the strong light of the arc and after a short pause advanced toward the car with arms extended.

"I came back for another look at that wonderful machine," he said. "I looked it over a short time ago and decided to have one built like it."

"Keep away!" advised Chester.

"But I have permission to examine the machine," urged the other.

"I have instructions to let no one come near it," Chester answered.

"You must be a stranger here, then," Rowell declared.

"I have my instructions," insisted the boy.

"But, look here," Rowell argued, "I expect to leave this part of the country tomorrow, and I must have another look at that machine before I go. Mr. Nestor gave me full permission to examine it at any time I saw fit. I don't know who you are, but I know that you are exceeding

your authority. I'm coming up in spite of you."

"Keep away!" advised Chester. "I shall shoot if you attempt to come nearer. My instructions are to let no one approach the machine."

"Where are the boys?" demanded Rowell.

"They are not very far away," was the reply.

"Then," continued Rowell, "may I sit down by the fire and await their return? I must make a drawing of that dynamo."

"The best thing you can do," advised Chester, "is to go away and return after the boys come back."

"Oh, well," Rowell said, angrily, now that his arguments had proved unavailing, "if you won't listen to reason, I'll have to resort to force."

"That is a game two can play at," said Chester.

"I don't believe you have any instructions to keep me away from the machine," Rowell went on, "and I'm not going to submit to you impudence."

"Talk all you please," Chester responded, "but keep away from the machine. I'll shoot if you come nearer."

"I'll show you whether I'll keep away from the car or not!" Rowell almost shouted, flourishing a revolver as he spoke. "Your machine

is surrounded, and at the first indication of hostility on your part that tonneau will be riddled with bullets. Now shoot if you dare."

Chester did shoot at the gesticulating figure standing just at the edge of the light, but his bullet seemed to go wild, for the man stood immovable in his tracks.

"Close in boys!" cried the voice which had been so persuasive before. "Close in, and we'll soon have this young imp where he can do no harm!"

Chester fired two more shots, and the men stationed in the darkness beyond the circle of light did not advance. The boy could hear whisperings and exclamations of anger, but even Rowell had disappeared from sight.

At that moment, when the boy was filled with apprehension regarding the safety of the valuable motor car, the low, insistent rumble of a train came out of the east. It seemed to him that the outlaws must have heard the sounds of the approaching train before he did. At least he accounted for their failure to rush the motor car in this way.

No more threats or challenges came from the darkness as the train came thundering down the metals to the east. Chester expected that it would pass in a moment and he would then be at the mercy of the outlaws.

But, to his astonishment, and also, evidently, to the astonishment of the outlaws, the roar of the train became less strident as it drew nearer. There was no doubt that it was slowing down for a stop.

Above the grinding of the brakes as the long Pullman train came into sight and stopped, almost directly at the campfire, the boy heard the crash of falling rocks to the west, and knew that his enemies were taking the foothills at full speed, tumbling down boulders and slipping and sliding as they advanced.

When the train came to a standstill a score or more of passengers and trainmen appeared at the vestibule doors, but only one figure stepped down to the ground. This was the figure of a boy of not more than sixteen, nattily dressed, erect in figure, smiling of face. He carried in his hand a large suit-case well pasted over with labels showing extensive travel. As he stepped to the ground the train moved slowly on.

"Now, I wonder what this is?" Chester mused. "And I wonder, too, how that train came to stop here to let a boy off in the wilderness."

In a moment the boy who had left the train advanced to the fire, threw out his right hand in the full salute of the Boy Scouts, and set his suit-case down by one of the tent flaps.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" called Chester.

"Be prepared!" was the reply.

"Where from?" asked the boy in the tonneau.

"Black Bear, New York!" was the very welcome answer.

"Have you got any guns in that suit-case?" asked Chester, half smiling at the warlike greeting.

"You bet I have!" was the reply.

"Then get them out and come on over here," suggested Chester. "There's a band of pirates not far off. They would have owned the car by this time if the train hadn't come just as it did. What's your name?"

"Jack Bosworth," was the reply. "Ned and the boys ducked away and left me in New York, and I'm here to show them that they can't lose a Black Bear under any circumstances."

Instead of opening his suit-case and taking out his weapons, Jack ran directly to the machine and set it into the tonneau.

"There!" he said as he clambered in, "there's plenty of cartridges in there, and we can do quite a little shooting before they get this car."

He threw open the suit case displaying a suit of rough clothes and a natty Boy Scout uniform. Under these were the revolvers and

cartridges. This done, he turned to inspect his companion in the tonneau.

"Look out!" Chester said. "Don't get anywhere near that right leg. The boys set it only yesterday afternoon."

"And you lying here standing off brigands with a broken leg!" exclaimed Jack. "I think that must be going some."

"Well, Chester exclaimed, "Ned and Jimmie went off and didn't come back, and then Frank and Harry went away to look for them. That left me to guard the machine, so they fixed up a nice soft bed here and told me to shoot to kill."

"You're the boy with the double back-action nerve, anyway," Jack exclaimed. "I'm glad I happened along!"

"Its a wonder you got them to stop that train," Chester remarked. "I don't see how you did it."

"Huh!" laughed Jack. "What's the good of having a dad that's director in railroad companies if he can't get a little train like that to stop for you? And after I showed my order to the conductor he would have made me a present of the whole train if he had owned it."

Chester now laid a hand on the boy's arm to attract his attention and whispered:

"Do you hear anyone moving out there?"

The boys both listened intently, but no sounds came from the darkness. Two hours passed without incident, and then half a dozen crouching figures appeared at the rim of light.

"Come out of there, boys!" they heard. "Come out of there, or we'll shoot you up proper."

The answer came in the form of shots from the boy's automatics. After a dozen more shots had been fired, the outlaws disappeared from view for a short time, but they were about to advance again when shots came from the direction of the river.

"The fellows have received reinforcements," Chester remarked, "or Ned and the boys are returning."

"I'd like to know which it is," Jack muttered.

CHAPTER XV

BOY SCOUT'S PET

The boys were not kept long in suspense, for the next moment a shout came from the direction of the river.

"Chester!" Ned called.

"That's Ned!" Jack exclaimed.

Chester gave an answering shout, and then the firing ceased. It was plain that the outlaws were laboring under the impression that a large number of railroad detectives had been dropped at the camp by the Pullman train which had halted there.

After the answering shots fired by Ned and his chums, no more bullets came from the outlaws crouching in the darkness. In fact, when, a few moments later, the boys cautiously reconnoitered the ground in the vicinity of the motor car, no trace of the brigands could be found.

Ned waited a short time after the call came from the motor car and then advanced alone into the circle of light bending close to the ground in order to keep as far out of sight as possible. Much to his amazement his appearance attracted no bullets.

In a moment Frank, Harry and Jimmie

chased into the light and rushed up to the tonneau. The first face they saw there was that of Jack Bosworth, who rose up with a grin which stretched his mouth to enormous proportions. The boys stood looking at him in amazement for an instant and then Jimmie shouted:

"Where did you get that, Chester?"

"It just dropped down out of the sky!" Chester replied whimsically.

"You'd better be getting under cover somewhere, instead of standing there asking questions," Jack went on. "There's been about a ton of lead unloaded around this machine since I've been here."

It was then that the boys made a cautious survey of the ground immediately around the machine.

"I guess they've gone," Jimmie said, as he returned to the motor car.

"I should think they would go," Frank put in, "seeing a mob like this rushing out of the darkness."

"Now, Jack," said Ned, "how did you find your way here?"

"Well," Jack replied, "after you boys left New York I tried to be good and stay there, according to specifications, but I just couldn't do it. I just kept thinking of the jolly time the

Boy Scout Electricians must be having out here, and so I dumped a few things into a suit-case and followed you."

"But how did you get to the camp?" asked Ned. "It's a long way from the nearest station."

"How did he get to the camp?" repeated Chester. "Why, one of those Pullman trains drew up here, as big as life, and this boy climbed down like he was looking for a brass-band reception."

"Did they really stop the train here?" asked Jimmie.

"Of course they did," Jack replied. "I had an order from Dad."

It was now long after midnight, and the boys were all in need of rest so it was decided that two should watch the machine while the others retired to the tents.

"I'll watch, for one," Jack announced. "You see, I had a good rest last night and I'm fit."

"And I'll watch, too," Harry offered. "It'll take me about all night to wring the water out of my bones."

"Huh!" Jimmie snorted, "you needn't think you're so much. You only forded the river, while Ned and I paddled down it for about nineteen hundred miles."

It was late the following morning when the camp was astir again. There had been no

hostile demonstration of any kind during the night. When, after a hearty breakfast, Ned and Jack started out to look over the country, they saw no indications whatever of the outlaws.

"If you leave it to me," Jack said, as the boys surveyed the railroad right-of-way where the electric lights had been formerly shown, "those fellows won't come back here very soon. You've lost them, and that's all there is about it."

"You just wait!" laughed Ned. "At present, the train robbers are figuring that a score or more of railroad detectives came in on the train you left at the camp, but they'll soon find out that only one lone lorn Black Bear got off, and they'll come back."

"Well," Jack grumbled, "according to your own story of what took place when Jimmie was captured, these train robbers know now just what you boys are here for. If they come back, it will be to blow up the Scout with dynamite."

"And what will we be doing all this time?" demanded Ned with a smile. "We'd be watching them every minute."

"Well," Jack replied excitedly, "you came out here to catch these train robbers, didn't you? You haven't done it yet, but I hope you will do it. We don't want the Boy Scouts to make a failure.

"So you think we've muffed the game, do

you?" asked Ned with a laugh.

"Anyway," Jack grumbled, "they found out who you are, and they know that the railroad officers are aware of their presence here and I don't think they've got good sense if they don't get out of this country immediately. If they do, of course, we lose out."

"They won't," said Ned. "They'll come back here in some guise to get that pay car, after the excitement dies out."

"Oh, by the way," said Jack, "the pay car isn't going to be sent down this month. The officials are getting buffaloed by the train robbers. When things quiet down a little, the men who are building the spur just this side of Sixteen Mile canyon will be paid off."

"I'm afraid the men won't like that," Ned said.

"They'll have to like it," Jack answered.

When the boys returned to the camp Frank, Harry and Jimmie were broiling bear steak, and Jack began dancing around the fire at the idea of having a real wild west meal in a wild west locality.

"Oh, you bear steak!" he cried. "What would the boys say on the main street of little old New York?"

"I got that bear," Jimmie chuckled. "He came in here and began eating our honey, so I

electrocuted him. We're going to have his hide in the Black Bear club room in New York. It will make a fine rug."

"After dinner," Jack suggested, "let's go out and get another."

"Let's get an elephant, or something of that kind this time," Jimmie laughed. "You know you can't go out and pick up a bear every minute. They are supposed to be as thick here as tin-horn gamblers on the Bowery, but they have a way of keeping hidden."

"Yes," Frank put in, "you two go out and bring in another bear, or a mountain lion, or a fish, nine feet long, or something of that kind. It seems to me I won't want to do anything but eat for the next three weeks."

"If you're going to have a meal three weeks long," Jimmie chuckled, "you'll have to do most of the cooking."

After dinner Jimmie and Jack started away to the south. Jimmie had previously been over this ground with Ned, and therefore knew where to find the smoothest paths to the foot hills, which grew higher and higher as they passed to the west. After walking a couple of hours they came to a rocky barrier which seemed to forbid farther progress.

"Right here," Jimmie explained, "Crazy Range begins. Away off there to the south is

Crazy Peak. You can see it from here, sitting up there in the south like a man with white hair, or like a girl with one of these huge white hemisphere hats."

"That's snow, of course," Jack suggested.

"You bet it's snow!" Jimmie answered. "We could freeze to death up there in less than an hour."

The boys followed the rocky face for half an hour or more and then came to where a little wooded gully pierced the cliff. A little spring of water came out of the rock some distance up and the place looked cool and inviting, so, as the sun was hot, and the boys were tired, they tramped up the depression and sat down under the shade of a straggling tree.

"There's one thing about this wild country," Jack said, as he lay on his back in a mossy bed with his face turned up to the blue sky, "you don't have to register and tip the elevator boy every time you want to take a sleep."

In five minutes the boy was lost in dreamland. As will be remembered, he had stood guard the night before, and had declined to retire to one of the bunks when daylight came.

"Go it!" Jimmie said to himself, as Jack snored away under the tree. "While you pound your ear I'll go up the gully and look for train robbers. They may be hiding here. It sure is

a fine place for a robbers' residence—almost as fine as the cave where Stearns took me."

The boy walked steadily west until he came to the end of the gully, which ran square against a perpendicular face of rock. Looking about for a moment, he threw himself down on a grassy bank and closed his eyes. In a moment, laying thus, with mind already clouded with slumber, he felt the touch of a soft muzzle on one of his hands. Rising sleepily to a sitting position, he rubbed his eyes and looked about, wondering if he had not been dreaming. But no, there was a handsome little animal, not much larger than a year-old kitten, cuddling up against his side.

The fur of the animal was thick and close reddish brown above, lighter on the sides, and reddish brown on the belly. The muzzle, chin, throat and insides of the legs were grayish white; the breast almost pure white.

"Kitty! kitty!" cried Jimmie. "Come on and make friends."

The animal regarded the boy with eyes in which wonder and suspicion were mingled, and Jimmie took it into his arms and rubbed his cheek against the soft fur. He then saw that his new-found pet had three rows of dark brown spots on the back and other markings which disclosed a near relationship to the leopard.

"You little customer!" Jimmie cried, rubbing the white breast of the little creature, "its dollars to doughnuts that you're a baby mountain lion or a baby puma, or whatever they call you animals in this country."

The little captive purred softly like a kitten and arched its back to the stroke.

"Say," Jimmie said directly. "You'd make a fine little fellow to take back to the Central Park Zoo. Where's your mama?"

Jimmie's interesting little acquaintance was not obliged to answer the question, for the mother puma answered it in person.

Jimmie heard a catlike snarl and felt the air in motion as a powerful body passed within an inch of his ear. In her anxiety not to injure the kitten, the mother puma had missed her quarry in springing.

The boy got to his feet and backed off toward an opening which he saw in the cliff, while the mother puma made certain that her baby had not been injured by contact with this stranger.

The solicitude and curiosity of the mother, in fact, saved the boy's life, for when she turned to attack him he stood behind a boulder which obstructed almost the entire mouth of a little cavern which had been eaten into the rock by the waters of a spring long since run dry.

The lad's first action was, of course, to draw

his revolver, but when he was ready to shoot the puma was not ready to be shot at. Instead of advancing directly up to the cavern where she would have been directly under fire, she kept close to the wall of rock to the south. In this position she could prevent the escape of the boy without in any way risking herself.

CHAPTER XVI

CAPTURED BY PUMAS

After a time Jack Bosworth, lying on the moss lower down in the gully, awoke and stretched his arms out lazily.

"Now, I wonder where that little monkey has gone?" he asked himself. "I might have been eaten alive lying here alone."

He arose, turned to the mouth of the gully, looking to see if the boy was anywhere in view lower down, and then walked west.

"The little monkey!" he exclaimed. "I'll bet he's gone and got himself into trouble! He always does!"

As the boy proceeded up the gully he became cognizant of a snarling growl not unlike that produced by a hoarse-voiced tom cat on the back fence. At first the sound did not center in any one direction, but soon a movement in the bushes disclosed the whereabouts of the maker of the threatening rumble. Jack stopped instantly and sprang behind a cluster of small trees growing out of the side of the north wall.

"If that's a mountain lion," he thought, "it won't do me any good to climb a tree. All I

can do is to keep behind something and shoot if he becomes too familiar."

Directly the animal which had been addressing itself to the invader of his domain showed in a clear spot not far away. It was at least five feet in length from the nose to the root of the tail. The tail was long and covered with thick fur. It was coiled as if prehensile.

"If we were a little farther south," the boy commented, "I should take you for a jaguar, but I never knew of their being as far north as this."

The puma remained in sight but a second only, then secreted itself in the bushes. As a matter of fact, the North American puma is not primarily a man-eating animal. It will tear down deer and sometimes even bear when hungry, but will attack men only when driven to desperation by hunger or in defense of its young. In South America whole droves of wild horses are frequently put to flight by these animals.

"Now," Jack thought, as he stood within the shelter of the trees, revolver in hand, "if you'll just come out here and play fair, we'll settle this right now. If you think I'm going to stay here all day and play tag with you, you have another think coming. Jimmie will be along directly, and then you'll get yours good and plenty."

As the reader understands, at that moment Jimmie was pursuing virtually the same train of thought and waiting for Jack to come and put an end to his imprisonment!

However, Jack's address to the puma did not appear to inspire that animal with courage, for he remained hidden in the thicket. The boy could hear the underbrush crackling under the heavy tread of the beast, and could see the tops of the bushes moving to and fro, but he could not see the animal, which was evidently crouching low.

"All right!" Jack said. "If you won't come out into the open, I'll see if a bit of lead can find its way to you. I've got plenty of cartridges, and you'll have to get farther away than that before you can play tag with me successfully."

Aiming at the center of the thicket, the boy fired two shots and waited for the smoke to lift There was now no more motion at all in the thicket, and Jack hoped that one of the bullets had found a vital spot.

While he listened for some motion, he heard Jimmie calling.

"When you get a minute's time," Jimmie cried, "you might come up here and shoot this wild animal away. He thinks he's got a steady job as outer guard to this cave!"

Jack checked a chuckle with difficulty.

"You haven't got anything on me," he said. "I've got a wild animal about ten feet long watching me."

"Can you see him?" asked Jimmie.

"I can see the bushes where he lies," was the reply.

"Then fill 'em full of lead," Jimmie responded, "and come on up here and drive this brute away."

"Why don't you drive him away yourself?" asked Jack.

"I can't see him," was the answer, "but I can hear him licking his chops!"

Accepting the advice offered by Jimmie, Jack stormed the thicket with a rain of bullets until the acrid smell of powder smoke permeated the entire gully. He had no means of knowing whether any of the shots had taken effect, but under cover of the smoke he crept out of his hiding place and moved toward the thicket, a weapon extended in his hand ready for use. There was no stir in the undergrowth as he advanced.

A moment later Jimmie heard a snarl, and two quick shots, and then Jack called out to him:

"I got him!" the boy shouted. "He looks to me to be about as big as the Singer building!"

"That must be the papa of the little pet I

acquired a while ago," Jimmie said. "Now come on up and discourage the attentions of the mother."

"I'll be there in a minute," Jack replied.

"Well, you'll have to look what you're doing when you come!" Jimmie warned, "for this little old bunch of fur watching me seems to be getting hungry. She's been trying to coax me out."

Jack advanced up the gully and soon came within sight of the boulder at the mouth of the cavern into which Jimmie had clambered. The puma lay crouched like a cat at the side of the entrance, her nose not more than a yard away from the boulder which protected the boy. The kitten which Jimmie had fondled lay keeled over on its back by her side playing with its own paws.

Jack did not show himself at all, yet the puma both heard and sensed his presence. As the boy drew nearer, she arose from her crouching position and faced him. That was the time to shoot and Jack knew it.

Three shots were fired in rapid succession, and when the smoke lifted the puma was seen lying stretched out on the ground, the kitten playing unharmed by her side. Jimmie was out of his shelter before Jack reached him, lifting the kitten into his arms.

"What are you going to do with that?" demanded Jack.

"Why," Jimmie replied, "this is an orphan. I'm going to take it to a home for dependent children in New York—a home under the direction of one William T. Hornaday, up at Central Park. I guess you've heard of it."

"Fine thing to lug around the country, that would be!" Jack snarled.

"Jack," Jimmie grinned, "you're getting to be the biggest grouch on the North American continent. I'm told you roasted Ned because we haven't caught the train robbers. Now if you'll just keep that twirler of yours still for a little while, we'll cage those train robbers and exhibit them at a dime a head."

"All right, Jimmie!" Jack laughed. "I guess I am getting to be something of a pessimist."

"Cut it out, then!" said Jimmie. "We don't need no prophet of evil in our camp. We've got excitement enough to fill a box car when baled for shipment, but we haven't got any kicks on our waybill. A Boy Scouts' camp is never a kick factory. It's a place where the boys will try to raise roosters out of china eggs if the Scout masters tell them to do it."

"Of course," Jack replied, "and I'm going to quit my kicking right now. I've promised often before, but this time, I'll do it."

"The only way to quit anything," Jimmie grinned, "is to quit."

"And the way to get two fine rugs out of these pumas," Jack went on, "is to take the hides back to camp."

"We'll have to hurry," Jimmie said, "for it's getting dark now."

The boys set to work and soon had the hides rolled in neat packages. Then, Jack carrying the future rugs and Jimmie following along behind with the baby puma, they moved down the gully and came out on an elevation from which the camp could be seen.

Twilight was falling, and the ruddy light of the campfire was beginning to show. While the boys looked, the arc light blazed out and they could see their chums moving about the motor car.

"How long will it take us to get down there?" asked Jack.

"An hour or more," answered the other.

"Then I wish I'd eaten more of that bear steak," Jack observed.

"Me too!" Jimmie cried. "I'm so hungry now that even this raw hide smells good to me."

The boys plodded steadily along, the camp in sight whenever they came to the summit of a foothill, and out of sight whenever they clamb-

ered down into one of the little valleys which lay under the hills.

When they were still a mile or more from camp, a red rocket was sent up.

"They think we're lost!" cried Jimmie.

"No wonder they think so," Jack answered, "you always do get lost."

In a few moments another red rocket cut its way through the heavy twilight and a gunshot was heard.

"Now, what does that mean?" asked Jack.

"It means that our friends, the train robbers, are getting into action," was the reply. "It is about time, anyway."

"If you leave it to me," Jack said in a disgusted tone, "there isn't a train robber within ten miles of this place."

"All right," Jimmie replied. "We'll put our feet to the road until we come to the camp, and then we'll know all about it."

When the boys came to within a couple of hundred yards of the campfire they were met by Frank, who stood in the shadows watching and listening.

"We thought you fellows never would get back," the boy said. "What kind of a cat is that you're carrying, Jimmie?" he continued, taking note of the pet the boy had secured in the gully.

"That's a baby puma," Jimmie replied. "We're going to give it to the New York Zoo."

"You must have had a fine time getting it away from its mother," Frank suggested.

"We killed the mother," Jack answered.

"It isn't according to Boy Scout education to go around killing wild animals," Frank declared. "If you let them alone, they'll let you alone, as a rule. This little creature would be a great deal happier in these mountains than in the New York Zoo."

"Well," Jimmie grinned, turning up his freckled nose, "we really didn't want to kill the mother of this little pet. We don't kill wild animals unless we have to, you know, but you see, this mother puma was killed in self defense. She drew a gun on us!"

"Well, let's hurry back to the fire," Frank snickered, "we've got a job on our hands tonight."

"That'll be nice!" cried Jimmie. "I wouldn't sleep a night if I had the chance. Can't you find a river for me to wade tonight?" he added, remembering his experience of the night before.

"It's this way," Frank exclaimed, "you know, Jack, what you said about the railroad people holding back the pay car because of the robbers. Well, there's a nice little riot going on over west because of it. In some way, the muckers

learned that they weren't going to get their pay this month and they're making a row."

"I don't see what we've got to do with that," Jack suggested.

"Well," Frank replied, "Ned learned of the existing conditions by tapping a wire, not long ago, and the general manager asked if he couldn't do something for the company. The hard rock men are massed in a cut and threaten to wreck the next train. We signaled for you because we're going to shift camp."

CHAPTER XVII

AN ELECTRIC TRAP

When the boys reached the camp they found Ned and his chum busily engaged in stowing all the cables and wire into the motor car. Even the one used in connection with the arc lamp was taken down.

"This looks like moving!" Jimmie exclaimed.

"That's what we are doing," Harry explained. "We are now going to the front, and going to take the Scout with us."

"I don't see any transportation facilities," Jack observed. "You boys haven't got a flying machine big enough to move the car, have you?"

"Some day we may have one large enough," Ned answered, "but at present we are expecting to move her on the surface of the earth."

"Where did you get that baby cat you are carrying, Jimmie?" asked Harry. "It looks like you'd been robbing some Old Maid's Home."

Ned now began an examination of the two hides which the boys had brought in. His face showed amusement as well as surprise.

"Where did you get them?" he asked.

"Fruits of conquest!" chuckled Jimmie. "We

met 'em out here in a gully with chips on their shoulders, and that's all about all."

"What are you going to do with that kitten?" Ned continued.

"We're going to give it to the Zoo," Jimmie replied, and then the story of the adventure in the gully was related.

"Now," Ned said after a pause, "you boys get busy with the supper, and I'll get the tents ready for packing."

"You going to tear everything down?" asked Jack.

"I'm afraid we'll have to," Ned answered. "We're going out to the vicinity of Sixteen Mile canyon, and anything left here would probably be stolen."

"You say it well," Jack cut in, "but how are you going to move a motor car over a country that mostly stands up on end?"

"The construction gang arranged for that," Ned answered. "There is a pretty fair wagon road running along the line as far as we need to go. It may be a little rough but it will answer our purpose."

Ned continued his packing and the other boys hastened to prepare supper.

"Make a whole lot of sandwiches," Ned suggested, "because we may not have a chance to cook anything in the morning."

"You must be laying out a regular military campaign," suggested Harry.

"It may amount to that," smiled Ned. "You see, it is this way: There are a hundred or more men working on a spur a short distance this side of Sixteen Mile canyon. They should have been paid off this morning, but, instead of the money, the foreman has received word that the cash would not be here for several days yet. Now these hard-rock men have gathered in a deep cut some distance this side of Sixteen Mile Creek and threaten to hold up the first train that passes unless they are paid off in full. The situation is thought to be serious."

"This is a nice, pleasant little country, isn't it?" laughed Jack. "When the train robbers take a vacation, the track builders start trouble. When I get back to New York, I'm going to advise Dad to sell all the stock he owns in this road."

"Huh!" chuckled Jimmie, "when we get back to New York, there won't be any train robbers in this section, and the hard-rock men will all be working away, meek as little lambs."

"I hope so," Jack replied, "but there'll have to be something done before the conditions you suggest can be established."

"We'll take the motor car down this wagon road," Ned explained, "until we come within a

short distance of the narrow cut where these trackmen are congregated. In fact, we couldn't go any farther if we wanted to, for there is no road through the cut. Then, when we get the Scout into the right position, we'll run a wire—three or four of them if necessary—across both ends of the cut and starve them out."

"You can't hold 'em in with a wire!"sneered Jack. "They'd cut a ton of wires the minute they came to them!"

"Yes, and the man who did the cutting would drop dead in his tracks," suggested Frank. "Those wires will carry five hundred volts, and that's enough to kill a regiment."

"Well, then," argued Jack, "what's to hinder the men from climbing up the sides of the cut?"

"I am told," Ned answered, "that the sides of the cut are solid, smooth rock forty feet high."

"In that case," Jack admitted, "you'll have the hard-rock men as safe as if they were locked up in jail."

"That's no lie!" Frank declared. "We'll have them eating corn out of our hands in about one hour."

"They won't get hungry in that time!" Harry suggested.

"I'll tell you what they will do," Ned said. "They will try to crawl under the wire or to step over it, and the ones who try that will go

out for the count. There probably will be a rush for the wires as soon as they are discovered, and the result will be that no second attempt to break out will be made. Enough of them will touch the wires to be knocked senseless, and that will discourage the rest."

"All right!" Jack said. "I suppose you've got it all figured out. Anyway, it listens good to me, and I'm anxious to see the plan put into execution. But how are you going to get the wires stretched across the west end of the cut?"

"If the information received from division headquarters is accurate," Ned answered, "the construction gang was obliged to build a rough wagon road over the ridge through which the cut runs. This road is not at the summit of the ridge exactly, but passes through a shallow cut at the top.

"If this is correct, we can run the Scout up this road and into the cut where it cannot be seen from below. Then we ought to be able to manage to string wires at both ends of the cut where the men are waiting with mischief in their hearts."

"And Jimmie and Harry," laughed Jack, "can hold one end of the wires, with the other end tied to telegraph poles."

"I don't think they'll have to hold any wires," laughed Ned. "Headquarters informs me that

there are posts at both sides of the track at each end of the cut—posts erected for the purpose of holding the usual warnings set up at the entrance to tunnels and long cuts.

"Did you tell headquarters what you were going to do?" asked Jack.

"I certainly did not!" was the reply. "I told them that I would visit the scene of the trouble and see what I could do. I am to wire in as soon as I get there. If my plans do not miscarry, my first message in will ask them to run a special down here and tote their obstreperous trackmen back to the nearest station, where they can be paid off. They'll be glad to do that."

"Yes, that's all right," Jack grumbled, "its all right to take a hundred prisoners with a few pieces of wire, and there is little doubt about your ability to do it, but what are these hard-rock men going to be doing while you are stringing the wires?"

"Aw," Jimmie broke in, "they'll be making stump speeches and telling what they're going to do to the railroad company."

"Yes," Ned replied, "they'll be doing something of that sort. Their foreman telephoned conditions in to the company, and they're expecting a pay car some time tonight. Of course, under present conditions, the company might

send the pay car down with safety, the robbers having been frightened away for the time being, but as I understand it the company doesn't like the idea of allowing these men to dictate terms."

"And, therefore," laughed Frank, "they've called upon the Boy Scout Electricians to go over there and tell the rioters to be good."

By this time supper had been eaten and everything packed into the car. There was no moon, but the sky was clear, so, once away from the conflicting light of the campfire, the old wagon road left by the construction gang was not hard to follow. In spite of the primitive character of the highway, the Scout made good time, and in an hour from the start the motor car stood near an old shanty in the shallow depression at the top of the ridge through which the rock-walled cut ran.

"I'd like to know if they saw our lights when we came down the road?" Frank asked when the motors were stopped.

"Unless they had lookouts," Ned replied, "or unless they heard the clatter of the motors, they don't know that there is an automobile within five hundred miles of them."

"Don't you ever think they heard the motors talking," Harry put in. "Just you listen for a few minutes."

The boys all listened intently. From the

cut below came a perfect babel of maudlin shouts and bellowings of rage. As it afterwards transpired, the men had had a barrel of whisky shipped in in order that payday might be properly celebrated. This liquor had been forcibly taken from the two men who had brought it in, and who had anticipated a fine profit on the venture, and most of the men who were threatening to hold up the train were very much intoxicated.

When Ned moved up to the edge of the cut and looked down, he saw torches and red railway lanterns flashing to and fro, their light falling upon bloated and inflamed faces marked with rage and hate. It was quite evident that the men were already awaiting the arrival of a train, for they were swinging their lanterns to and fro across the track as a warning to those in charge of any trains which might approach.

"That's a fine mob down there," Frank suggested, creeping to Ned's side and gazing down upon the scene of disorder. "If the pay car should put in an appearance now, those fellows wouldn't wait to have the money counted out to them. The chances are that the men on the pay car would be mobbed and perhaps murdered."

"There is little doubt that they would loot the train," Ned replied. "They look like determined fellows."

"They are great hulking brutes!" Frank declared.

"And I don't believe," Ned went on, "that all this disorder was brought about by the failure of the pay car to appear this morning. Payment has frequently been delayed before, but nothing like this has ever taken place on such occasions."

"Do you think there are interested persons at the bottom of it?" asked Frank.

"I certainly do," answered Ned.

"Some rival company?" questioned the boy.

"I had not thought of that," replied Ned.

"It couldn't be any one else," Frank insisted.

"Suppose," Ned said, "that the bandits who have been hovering over this section for several days really belong in that track-laying gang. Suppose they work there with those men, thus securing protection from suspicion of any kind. Suppose their leaders are playing the part of gentlemen sportsmen in the mountains and making plans for their tools who are working on the new spur?"

"Je-rusalem!" whispered Frank. "Do you suppose anything of that kind is going on here?"

"I don't know," Ned replied, "but I have been wishing all along that the leaders were down there in that pit with their tools."

"So you could capture the whole bunch at one picking!" laughed Frank.

"That would be too good to come true," Ned replied.

"And so it is your idea that all this riot, all this mess kicked up over the absence of the pay car today, was brought about purposely by the men we came here to bring to punishment?" asked Frank.

"That is only a misty notion in my mind," Ned answered. "I don't believe the track-layers would, if let alone, resort to such questionable means to hasten the arrival of the pay car. They have been lured into this by men hoping to profit by the incident."

After watching the disgraceful scenes, the quarrels, fights and other disorderly acts below for some time, Ned and Frank returned to the motor car. They found the boys already removing the wires from the tonneau and cautiously stretching them to the east and west down the declivities. In a few moments the wires connected with the dynamo led to the warning-sign posts at the entrance to the cut. All that remained now was to string the wires which were to hold the men prisoners as soon as they became charged with all the electricity the dynamo could produce.

"Now," Ned said, "the next thing is to run

across the tracks with the wires and attach them to the posts on the opposite side. The rioters, doubtless, have outposts watching for the arrival of the pay car, at least at the east end. It will be a dangerous undertaking to lay the wires there and I shall need an assistant. Who's game for it?"

Every boy in the party was anxious to undertake the job, and even Chester, lying at the bottom of the tonneau with a broken leg, suggested that he might be able to help some if the boys would leave a couple of automatics with him.

"Well," Ned said, "Jimmie and I have been through a good many trying situations together, and if you fellows don't mind, I'll take Jimmie with me. It will be necessary to draw two wires from post to post; one about a foot from the ground, the other waist high. Here are short sections of rubber hose to clamp around the wire where it would otherwise come in contact with the posts. This insulation will give a much stronger current."

CHAPTER XVIII

AN UNHEEDED WARNING

"And while you are at work on the east wires," Frank stated, "Harry and I will go down the west slope and put up the wires there."

"And where do I come in?" demanded Jack Bosworth. "I suppose you think, because I made a sneak on the party, I'm going to sit down and twirl my thumbs all day!"

"Well," Ned answered, "some one must remain here and watch the machine, also set the motors going and turn the dynamo loose when we signal from below."

"I can do that!" Chester said. "I wish this leg of mine was well! I wouldn't like any better fun than helping fix those wires."

"I'm afraid," Ned said hesitatingly, "that you can't get around quite fast enough, Chester. At least, we boys at the wires will have more confidence in the plan if Jack is here looking after things."

"All right!" Chester replied, "but I can shoot if anyone attacks the car. I can shoot now straighter than I did the other night."

And so Ned and Jimmie went on down the eastern declivity, while Frank and Harry slid

down to the west, each party taking two coils of wire with them.

When Ned and Jimmie reached the east approach to the cut they found a wild mob raving and cursing between the high rock walls. Many of the trackmen stood almost at the mouth of the cut, evidently waiting the arrival of the pay car.

"Now," Ned said to Jimmie before they stepped out on the roadbed, "we'll fasten the wires on this side first and then make a quick dash across. You handle the lower wire, and I'll place the one on top. Split your rubber hose and place it around the wire so that we can loop it over the post on the opposite side and get back here in as short a time as possible."

"I'm game for the job all right!" Jimmie answered, "but I wish some of those men would get a little farther away."

"There ought to be some way of attracting their attention to the middle of the cut," Ned said, thoughtfully.

"You just wait a minute!" Jimmie said. "I'll chase back to the top and have Jack throw something down about the middle of the cut. The fellows will be sure to become excited and suspicious and rush in from both ends, and while they're looking the other way, we can place the wires."

"As Frank says, Jimmie," Ned answered, with a smile, "you sometimes show evidence of almost human intelligence! Chase yourself up the hill now and tell Frank to throw down a rock or something, after you have had plenty of time to get back here, of course."

"Me for the climb," Jimmie snickered, starting away.

In a moment, however, he turned back and suggested:

"We ought to let Frank and Harry know, hadn't we?"

"That's another evidence that you really have talent for a thinking part!" Ned laughed. "When you get there tell Jack to notify the other boys, and then you start down this side. If Jack throws the stones as soon as he returns to the car, both parties will be ready to act."

Jimmie chased away up the steep ascent and Ned sat down by the post, out of sight from the cut, to wait. While he sat there a short, heavily built man approached the mouth of the passage and appeared to be looking anxiously up the track.

Now and then he left the shadows of the cut entirely and walked for some distance toward the east. Ned was wondering if the fellow would remain out of the cut long enough to escape being

wired in when another man came running out and addressed him excitedly.

"Stearns!" the newcomer said, "we've got to look out for that bum crowd back there. They are all drunk, and many of them have guns. If we don't keep our men together, and mount the car the instant it stops, they'll get the loot we're working for."

"Well," the man who had been addressed as Stearns replied, "go back and get the men together, and tell them exactly what to do when the pay car comes. You and I, you know, give our personal attention to the men in the cab. The car will stop here only long enough for our men to get aboard, and then we'll persuade the engineer to take us out of the cut in jig time. Joke on the railroad people, this!"

"I should say so," answered the other who had been addressed as Tom. "When they got those boys down here, they thought they had us backed off the siding."

"It will be a joke on the Boy Scouts, too," Stearns went on, "because I warned that little newsboy that we were going to gather in a harvest from the next pay car! And, do you know, that little rat laughed at me!"

"But suppose the pay car doesn't come?" asked Tom. "Then the joke will be on us."

"Oh, it'll come all right," replied Stearns

"The foreman used his relay not long ago, and headquarters reported that there was a train already on the way to this point. Why, they daren't do anything else. We have absolute control of the situation."

"We seem to have," replied Tom, "but what are we going to do if some of our men fail to get into the car?"

"Leave them here!" was the reply. "There are a dozen of them, anyway, and that makes the division too small."

"That's a cold-blooded proposition!" Ned was thinking, as he listened to this conversation. "They are planning to leave members of their own band here at the mercy of these drunken brutes."

While the men stood talking together Ned heard a rattling of pebbles not far away, and knew that Jimmie was returning to the tracks. The boy did not come on, however, but waited, understanding, of course, that he must not show himself or betray the presence of Ned while the two men were so near at hand.

The men talked on, laying plans for the future, for perhaps five minutes longer, and then a crash came from somewhere near the center of the cut which sent them both flying in that direction.

"Now, Jimmie!" Ned whispered.

The boys darted across the tracks with the wires in their hands, whirled them around the posts, and shot back to the other side. In a moment the supply wires connecting with the dynamo were fastened to those leading across the tracks and the trap was set.

"Now, what's the signal?" whispered Jimmie.

"Two quick shots," replied Ned. "We are to fire first, and if Frank and Harry are ready their shots will follow ours immediately; and then the electricity will be turned on."

"Gee!" cried Jimmie, "they'll go rushing out to the entrances when the shots are fired all right."

"That's the idea!" Ned replied. "I want the men in there to understand just what they're up against the very first minute."

Stepping aside so as to be a little farther from the view of those inside the cut, Ned drew his automatic and fired two quick shots. They were instantly answered from the west. In a second the clatter of the motors at the top of the hill announced that the signals had been understood, and that the deadly current was even then working its way through the barriers.

"Whatever you do now, Jimmie," Ned warned, "keep away from that feed wire! We don't want to have you electrocuted."

The firing of the shots and the clamor of the

motors brought about a second or two of silence in the drunken, brawling mob now surging back and forth in the narrow cut. Exclamations of surprise, dismay, and anger were heard rising above the drunken utterances of the trackmen.

Directly the two men who had visited the entrance a short time before made their appearance again. From their hiding place the boys could not see the advancing figures of the men, but one of them was carrying a red lantern, and this gave warning of their approach.

"I see their finish if they touch that wire!" Jimmie remarked.

"Perhaps I'd better warn them," Ned suggested. "I have no inclination to destroy human life."

"You show your head out there," Jimmie scoffed, "and you'll get a bullet in it. Those fellows haven't any scruples about taking human life."

The red light of the lantern was now very near the deadly barrier and Ned hastened to call out:

"Don't touch those wires, boys! They are heavily charged with electricity. Better keep away from them."

The light of the lantern came no nearer to the wires. There was silence for a moment except

for the clamor inside the cut, and then Stearns called out:

"Who's talking?"

"It is the information and not the individual that counts," replied Ned. "There is something like five hundred volts of electricity in those wires. If you touch them, you're a dead man. And I'd advise you not to come too near to them," he added.

Stearns came closer to the wire, so that the boys by leaning out and craning their necks could see him scornfully regarding the barrier.

"This must be one of your Boy Scout tricks!" he laughed.

"Call it what you like," Ned answered, "only keep away from the wires, if you value your life."

Stearns laughed heartily, scornfully, mirthlessly.

"I know something about electricity, too," he said. "Tom, run back to the bag I left in the cut and bring my rubber boots and gloves. I'll soon have these wires down."

"I warn you!" Jimmie cried, "that you'll risk your life if you touch those wires, even in rubber boots and gloves. Neither the gloves nor the boots are of solid, pure rubber. There are always weak spots in the cheap products of the factories. Not one pair of boots or gloves

in a thousand will protect against a high-tension wire."

"Of course, you're only plugging for your own game," Stearns laughed. "When Tom comes with the rubber goods, I'll show you a thing or two. I presume all this electricity comes from the dynamo on the motor car?" he added questioningly.

"It certainly does," answered Ned.

"You've got your nerve," Stearns sneered, "to tell me that a little toy dynamo on a little toy motor car can supply volts of electricity enough to kill a man."

"You'll understand the strength of the dynamo better," Ned answered, "if you cut those wires even while wearing rubber gloves."

At that moment the shouts and cries of the drunken trackmen came nearer, and the boys understood that Tom had explained the situation to them. As the mob drew closer Stearns swung his lantern so as to bring the wires into full view and warned them away.

"Wait till I get my outfit," he explained to them, "and I'll remove all danger."

"Do they think they're goin' to keep us in a bloomin' jail with four little wires?" demanded one of the hard-rock men.

"Make way!" another burly fellow cried, "and I'll crawl in between the bloody strings

and settle with the ginks on the outside!"

In spite of a sharp warning from Ned, who could hear the fellow's voice but could not see him, the man dashed up to the wire and bent his back to crawl through between the upper and lower strands. At first, as he pushed his bulky body along, there was a grim smile of determination on his face. Then his ruddy cheeks turned paler and his companions saw a sudden, uncontrollable twitching motion about the lips.

In the excitement of the moment Ned Nestor stepped out of his hiding place into full view. The sky was now only slightly overcast, and the light of the stars was considerable. In another hour the moon would be above the horizon, but now only the dim figure of the boy was observable from the cut.

"Come back here, Big Dan!" one of the men shouted, as the man continued to worm his way between the wires. "Come back here, or you'll be a dead one in a second!"

But it was too late. Big Dan, as the man had been called, turned a suffering face toward his friends and straightened up a trifle. The upper wire sagged for a second upon one shoulder and the man fell upon the wire beneath.

A cry of horror escaped from Ned's lips and he shouted out to the people on the other side of the wire:

"Keep away now, boys! Don't try to touch the man!"

Disregarding the warning, however, one husky hard-rock man stepped forward and seized the fallen man by one foot. Although the rescuer was instantly rendered unconscious by the shock he received through the body of his friend, his fall released Big Ben's body from the wire.

"That's murder!" Stearns shouted, shaking his fist excitedly at Ned.

"I'm sorry," Ned answered, "but the man was warned."

Tom now came up with the rubber boots and gloves of which he had gone in search, and Stearns, with a look of deadly hatred in his face, proceeded to draw them on.

"You are going to your death!" Ned warned.

"I am going to my death, am I?" shouted Stearns. "Boys," he added, "get your guns ready, and if anything happens to me, fill that boy out there full of lead. Shoot him anyway, if he attempts to move!"

"I'll shoot the first man that puts up a gun!" Jimmie shouted, and the automatic in his hands showed that he meant business.

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT THE TRAP CAUGHT

For just an instant no one in the cut moved as Jimmie's revolvers waved back and forth glittering under the stars. In fact, there were only three or four revolvers among those assembled at the entrance, and these hesitated to draw their weapons in the face of the ones held by the boy.

Stearns glanced at Jimmie with a scornful smile as he deliberately drew on the rubber gloves.

"That's the kid who tied Tom up like a mummy," the fellow snarled.

"Sure!" Jimmie answered with a tantalizing grin. "What did you expect me to do?"

"I'll show you what I'll do to you in about one minute," answered Stearns.

Ned shouted another warning as the fellow advanced to the wire and reached out a heavily gloved hand. His warning came too late, for the man's heavy, squat figure straightened and fell. The men immediately about him, remembering what had come to the man who had laid hold of Big Dan's body backed away apprehensively.

"Now, boys," Ned said as soon as the clamor would permit his voice to be heard, "you see what happened to the two men who disobeyed orders. I hope you'll all keep away from the wires."

"You think you're going to keep us in this bloomin' calaboose?" one of the hard-rock men shouted.

"Only for a short time," Ned answered. "There'll be a train here directly, and all the employees of the company will be taken up to the next station, where they will be paid off."

"You say it well, young fellow!" shouted a voice. "Why don't they pay us off here?"

"Because you're making fools of yourselves," Ned answered.

"It's just a scheme to get us locked up in in some city prison!" declared the other. "Don't you listen to him a minute, boys!"

"And that," whispered Jimmie, "is probably one of the train robbers posing as a hard-rock man."

"That is what I have been thinking," replied Ned.

"Anyway," Jimmie declared, "there's half a dozen or more of them grouped together talking privately to each other. They probably think this is a trap set to catch them."

"Well," Ned laughed, "that's just what it is."

"Je-rusalem!" answered the boy. "I thought this was only a scheme to prevent the workmen holding up the train until they received their pay. Why didn't you tell me about this before?"

"I think I did say something to you about it before," Ned answered, with a smile. "Don't you see," Ned went on, "that if the idea had been to quell this riot, the company could have sent a train guarded by a hundred officers. That would have prevented any holdup."

"I see," Jimmie whispered. "You've just laid out this scheme to catch the train robbers."

"That is about the idea," was the reply. "And now that the excitement is over at this point, we'd better scatter and look after anyone who may be prowling about."

"Meaning Hughes, Benson, Slosson and Rowell?" asked Jimmie.

"Yes, those are the men we are looking for now."

"They wouldn't be in that mob in there, would they?" Jimmie queried.

"No; they would hardly take chances in there," was the answer.

"Are you sure these fellows can't do anything to the wires if we go away?"

"I don't think," Ned said, "that after what

has happened, you could draw one of them near those wires with a pair of horses. Two men have sacrificed their lives, and one has been rendered unconscious. I think the warning ought to be sufficient."

Together the boys climbed the rough wagon road to the top of the ridge, taking great care to keep at a respectful distance from the supply wire. They found Frank and Harry already at the car, with Jack and Chester when they arrived there.

After a short consultation the boys scattered over the ridge, the idea being to learn if any of the suspected men were in that neighborhood. Ned kept straight to the north for a few rods and then descended the slope and came to a fairly level piece of ground within, perhaps, a quarter of a mile of the railroad right-of-way. Between the boy and the tracks was a stretch of earth fairly smooth in its conformation, but marked here and there with small rocky elevations.

Reaching one of these, Ned crouched down out of the light of the rising moon and listened. His notion was that if any of the men he suspected were watching about the cut awaiting developments, they would be hiding on that side of the ridge so as to be the first to discover the approach of the expected pay car.

The boy understood that the men higher up, as he unconsciously called them, would keep as close to the track as possible without rendering themselves liable to discovery. From the position he now occupied, Ned had a fairly good view of the country clear to the tracks. It was his purpose, of course, to dodge from hillock to hillock as occasion offered, and so cover the whole space up to the right-of-way.

From his hiding place the boy could hear shouts of rage coming from the cut. Now and then a red light flashed out on the glistening rails to the east, but no form appeared in view. After listening for a time Ned heard a murmur of voices to the west and crept closer, keeping in the shadow of a hillock not far away.

"Have you seen the signal yet?" a voice asked.

"I have not," was the reply.

"Are you sure you haven't missed it?"

"I've had my eyes on the elevation ever since I came here," was the sullen reply. "The signal has not been given. I don't know whether our men are in the cut or not."

"Just before I came up," the first voice went on, "I thought I heard pistol shots. Did you hear anything of the sort?"

"I did not," was the reply.

"Well, I am sure that I heard shots," insisted

the first speaker. "How long have you been here?" he went on.

"Just a few minutes," was the reply.

"Have you heard anything like the clatter of a motor?" was the next question.

"Not a clatter," came the answer.

"Well, then, listen!" said the first speaker.

In the stillness of the night, above the wraithy mouthings from the cut, came the sharp, insistent rattle of the motors.

"There!" one of the voices said. "You must have been deaf not to have heard that."

"Well, I didn't hear it until you called my attention to it," was the angry reply.

From the first Ned had been under the impression that at least one of the voices was familiar to him.

"Unless I am very much mistaken," he mused, "the man who is jacking up the other for not hearing the shots or the motor is Hughes, the fellow who fell in love with Jimmie's bear steaks."

"Well," the complaining voice said in a moment, "we may as well move east toward the tracks."

"The pay car ought to be here pretty soon," the other responded, "and we want to grab the rear platform the instant it slows down.

"Yes," the other insisted, "we've got to get

into the cars the first thing, get the clerks under our guns, and keep the hard-rock men out."

"That'll keep us some busy," the man Ned understood to be Hughes remarked, "but I guess we're equal to the emergency. What do you think about that, Benson?"

"So its Benson and Hughes, is it?" chuckled Ned.

"I think we can turn the trick all right," Benson replied. "The only trouble is that Stearns may not get the train in motion quick enough. Those hard-rock men will fly at the money car like terriers after rats. There is no doubt that half a dozen will be crushed under the wheels when the train moves off."

"That's their own risk!" replied the other.

"Well," Ned thought as the two men moved cautiously away to the south, "I think I have located the men 'higher up.' Now the question is, how am I to get hold of them? When they see a string of passenger coaches instead of a pay car coming down the line, they'll take to their heels, leaving their friends to take chances with the officers. The night's work will be incomplete unless the men are captured."

Hughes and Benson were now and then seen moving carefully along toward the right-of-way, hiding behind hillocks and seeking shadows everywhere as they advanced. Ned moved on

behind them, keeping as close as possible without running the risk of being discovered.

As the men advanced they stopped occasionally to reconnoiter and exchange opinions. Sometimes they were so far ahead of Ned that he could not hear what was passed between them. At other times he came so close that even their whisperings could be understood.

As the men drew nearer to the tracks the voices in the cut became more distinct. Although Ned was some distance in the rear of the men he was following, he had no difficulty in catching words spoken by the hard-rock men so strangely imprisoned.

Three or four lusty voices seemed to be urging the men to climb the walls, or destroy the wires. Others appeared to be urging caution.

"What does all that arguing mean?" Ned heard Hughes ask, in a moment.

"You may search me," Benson answered.

"Well," Hughes went on, "there's something afoot that we don't understand. Our boys were to walk up and down the track outside the cut so as to be ready to swarm about the pay car, and so keep the hard-rock men away, but I don't see one of them outside."

"No, though they're all close to the entrance," Benson replied, "They're all just where they shouldn't be—in the cut itself."

"I believe the presence of the motor we heard has something to do with it," Hughes declared. "We ought to discover what that means the first thing."

"I'll tell you what it means," Benson explained. "It means that those Boy Scout Electricians we have been watching have got into telegraphic communication with headquarters, and have been instructed to run down here and help protect the pay car."

"That's funny!" laughed Hughes. "Think of those kids coming down here to oppose a band of trained murderers like we've got in that cut!"

Ned was expecting every moment to hear the men refer to the wires he had stretched across the mouth of the cut, but as yet, they evidently had not observed them.

While the boy waited a faint rumble was heard away to the east.

"Now, we'll come to a showdown in about a minute and a half," said Hughes. "There's the train we're waiting for."

Ned waited with his heart in his throat until the train began to slow down. Then he stepped nearer to the two men and held a weapon ready for use. In a moment, Hughes cried out:

"What is the meaning of the wires stretched across the cut?"

"High tension wires, probably," Benson explained. "Now you see what that infernal dynamo is doing. And that isn't the pay car, either," he shouted, "but a string of day coaches."

CHAPTER XX

A SPOILED SCHEME

As Benson uttered this last exclamation, he started away closely followed by Hughes. In a second, however, Hughes brought him to a stop with a heavy hand on his arm.

"Wait!" the latter said. "Suppose we find out what is going on here before we run away."

"It is easy enough to see what's going on here," Benson answered, angrily. "Those Boy Scout Electricians have a powerful dynamo. The wires across the entrance to the cut are heavily charged, and the result is that our men are held prisoners with the hard-rock fellows."

"Why don't they cut their way out?" asked Hughes.

"Cut their way through a voltage of five or six hundred?" sneered Benson. "You don't know what you're talking about."

"It seems to me as if they ought to be able to get out," Hughes suggested. "I believe that I could."

"And here's another thing," Benson went on, lifting his voice in his excitement, "that train which is just pulling in here now carries a

regiment or two of armed man. You may be sure of that."

"Of course, you are right there!" Hughes assented.

"Yes, I am right in both instances," Benson went on. "Directly you'll see the current turned off the wire at this end. Then our men will be marched into the cars with the others. The whole bunch will be taken up to the next county seat, and our men will be thrust into jail and the railroad men will be paid off."

"Do you mean to say," asked Hughes, "that this whole trap was laid by the Boy Scout Electricians for the express purpose of rounding up our operatives?"

"You don't go back far enough," Benson replied. "We're the ones who laid the scheme, originally. We planned to get our men onto the spur work with the others. Then we planned to have our men start this riot in order to bring the pay car down here. We planned the whole blasted thing, and the Boy Scouts have turned it against us."

"Then, perhaps we'd better be getting out of the country," suggested Hughes. "There is no further need of us here."

"I'm not going to get out of the country until I get satisfaction of those Boy Scouts!" almost shouted Benson.

Hughes stopped to argue no more, but made a break straight for the north. After running a few yards he came face to face with Nestor, who stood awaiting his approach. He called out to Benson that they had again been tricked and dodged away.

Benson came running up, firing as he ran, and Ned was obliged to drop to the ground to avoid a storm of bullets which certainly would have killed him. Hughes and Benson, believing that Ned had been either killed or seriously wounded by one of their shots, dashed away at full speed. When Ned got to his feet again, they were out of sight behind the succession of hillocks.

"That's hard luck!" the boy mused, as he turned toward the railroad right-of-way, "and I shall take good care that the boys never learn how near I came to capturing the two highwaymen—and didn't do it!"

By the time Ned reached the right-of-way the locomotive stood with her nose within a few feet of the wire.

"Shall I run them down?" demanded the engineer leaning lazily out of the cab window.

Ned looked from the slight wires to the raging, cursing mass of drunken men inside the cut, and then turned back to the engineer.

"Run down the wires or the men?" he asked.

"Both!" grumbled the engineer.

"I wouldn't run against the wires just yet if I were you," Ned answered, "you'd be a dead man if you did."

"Electricity, eh?" asked the engineer.

"That's the idea," answered Ned.

At least a hundred armed men now detrained and stationed themselves along the track. Finally a handsome young man with a United States marshal's badge on his coat approached the boy and asked:

"Are you Ned Nestor?"

"The same," answered the boy with a smile.

"I was told that you would understand the the situation here," the officer went on.

"There isn't much to understand," Ned replied. "There are a lot of railroad men and several highwaymen penned in between those high tension wires. You ought to be certain that you get everyone now in that cut, because the train robbers will be the ones who will try the hardest to get away. The hard-rock men, who have doubtless been urged into this by the robbers, have nothing to fear."

"How are we going to get them out?"

"Bring your men up here," answered Ned, "and I'll have the electricity turned off on this side. Then you can take the wires down and march the men out one at a time."

"I understand," the officer replied.

"And, of course, when you get the men into the cars," Ned went on, "you'll see that they don't escape?"

"You may be sure of that," was the quick answer.

"I think," Ned continued, "that you ought to instruct your men to shoot any man who tries to escape, either on the way to the coaches or from the coaches. It is a sure thing that any man anxious to get away is a train robber."

"I think I appreciate the situation," the officer said. "Are you going back with us?"

"No;" replied Ned, "I must remain here. This present haul is very disappointing to me."

"And still, there must be quite a bunch of thieves in there," the officer laughed.

"Yes," Ned answered, "but the four executive heads of the gang are not there. Thus far, we have caught only the tools."

"At least," the officer urged, "you have caught enough to break up the gang for good."

"I doubt it," replied Ned in a disappointed tone. "And now," the boy continued, "if you don't mind, I'll leave you to get these fellows into the train while I go back and look after the motor car and the dynamo. When I get to the top of the incline, I'll turn off the electricity and

signal to you. Then you may remove the wires."

"Well," the officer suggested, "the more I think of this situation, the more humor I see in it. The idea of that mob of drunken men, stupidly drunk now, being held in captivity by four small electric wires!"

"Eight small electric wires," grinned Ned, "there are four at the other end of the cut."

"And those men on the ground?" asked the officer.

"Dead," replied Ned. "Electrocuted before they could be made to understand the danger of fooling with the wires."

After some further conversation the boy hastened to the top of the hill, shut off the dynamo long enough to disconnect the east wire, and then turned it on again. Then he gave the signal—a pistol shot—agreed upon and moved to the edge of the cut to look over.

Off to the east he could see the officers removing the wire and marching the men two by two into the coaches. Some of the men were ashamed of themselves and submissive. Others were quarrelsome and sullen, while still others offered physical resistance to the officers.

"Those are the train robbers," mused Ned, "and there are more of them than I thought there were."

Indeed, there were at least a dozen men who fought the officers tooth and nail. Some of them had guns, while others had knives. Had they been less stupid from the effects of drink the officers might have had serious trouble with them. In this case, however, John Barleycorn assisted the officers greatly. Those who resisted were soon quieted and handcuffed, and directly the train moved slowly away.

The last Ned saw of it as it disappeared around a small curve, the officer in charge stood on the rear platform swinging his hat in congratulation and farewell.

By this time the other boys were gathering about the motor car.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't turn off the juice'" Frank laughed at Ned. "We could see the men leaving the cut at the other end, and came very near trying to take down our own wires."

"Yes," Jimmie remarked, "it would have been a nice thing to have taken the current out of those wires while the officers were dragging the men out of the other end. About half the highwaymen would have escaped!"

"I never thought of that!" cried Frank. "Anyway, turn off the juice now, and we'll go down and bring up the wires."

The wires were soon brought to the top of the

ridge, and the motor car made ready for traveling.

"Where are you going now?" asked Frank.

Ned shook his head gravely.

Jimmie laughed and pointed away off to the east.

"Little old N. Y.!" he asked.

"Not yet!" Frank insisted. "I want to stay here long enough to send in a despatch to Dad's newspaper."

"To tell the truth, boys," Ned responded in a moment, "I'm up a stump. I don't know what to do. To be honest about it, I feel like crawling into a hole somewhere and pulling the hole in after me."

"What's wrong now?" demanded Jimmie.

"I know what's wrong," laughed Frank, "Ned is mourning because the men higher up got away. Isn't that so, Ned?"

"That's just it," Ned replied, moodily.

"Well," declared Jack Bosworth, "that means that we can stay in these beautiful mountains a little longer!"

"Yes, if we want to, we can stay in the mountains the rest of our lives!" Frank put in, "but there's nothing to show that the outlaws will long remain here after such a deal as this."

"You bet your life, they'll stay here!" Jimmie said. "You see," he continued, "the cops are

after them, and they haven't any place to go! Don't you think they'll remain here for awhile yet, Ned?" he asked.

"I rather think they will," was the reply, "although there's no knowing what they'll do. Still, as has been said, the men are fairly well known now, and so they are likely to remain in hiding here until the heat of the search dies out. They may consider themselves safer here than anywhere else."

"It seems to me," Frank said, "that the men higher up, as we call them, have been making mistakes all through this game. In the first place, they should never have come to our camp. In the second place, they never should have brought a large force here. In the third place, they never should have mixed their men with the railroad employees. If they had kept out of all these errors, their men would have been free yet, every one of them, and the leaders would still remain unknown."

"There's something in that," Ned answered, "but the question now is this—where are we going to pick up the new trail?"

"I can ask a more pertinent question than that," suggested Jimmie.

"Don't ask it," grinned Frank, "it is sure to be about something to eat. Jimmie always wants something to eat!"

"I never saw you running away from any good food!" Jimmie retorted.

"Anyway," Jack observed, "we ought to be getting the Scout into some quiet place where we can eat and sleep and take our comfort until we make up our minds what we ought to do."

"Especially eat!" laughed Jimmie.

Chester now raised a smiling face from the tonneau and broke into the conversation.

"Back where I got ditched," he said, "there's a sleek little cavern where a machine like this might be hidden. I saw it before I became unconscious from my injury, and remember of trying to crawl towards it, but I guess I didn't make much progress. You noticed the rocky elevation there, didn't you?" he continued, turning to Ned.

"I noticed a pretty extensive cut and fill," replied Ned.

"Well," Chester went on, "back in there, somewhere, there's a larger cavern than the one in sight, and, somewhere, inside of it is a water fall. Lying in the sun by the track that day, I heard the dashing of water, and I remember of thinking that I'd give half of the rest of my life if I could only get to it."

"Why, I didn't see any creek there," said Ned.

"But there must be one," Chester insisted. "What I heard wasn't all imagination. The

creek I heard may be a tributary to Lost Horse creek."

"That's a fact!" Frank said. "There is a tributary that runs into Lost Horse creek not far from the spot where we camped."

"Suppose we go and investigate that cavern," Jack proposed.

This was agreed to, and by noon of that day the Scout, after passing the old quarters, was backed into a cavern facing the west, only a few yards distant from the railroad right-of-way.

"Now," questioned Chester, lifting from the tonneau, "what do you think about my waterfall?"

"There's one somewhere near," Ned answered, after listening a moment, "and I guess the larger cavern you spoke of isn't very far away, either."

That night the boys learned just how far away it was!

CHAPTER XXI

AERIALS IN ACTION

"Speaking of fish," observed Jimmie with a grin, "I wonder if there's anything good to eat in Lost Horse creek."

"Who said anything about fish?" demanded Harry.

"Well," answered Jimmie, "I was thinking about fish, and that amounts to the same thing. Here we are, out in the mountains, among the rushing rivers and the purling brooks, and we ain't having any more fish dinners than we would if we lived on the top of the Singer building."

"Why don't you go and catch fish, then?" asked Jack.

"For the love of Mike!" Frank broke in, "don't send that incompetent away to catch fish!"

Jimmie grinned and started away in the direction of the creek.

"I'll have a trout as big as a sturgeon in about ten minutes," he said. "It's easy enough to catch fish."

There was no room between the face of the cliff, pierced by the cave, and the railroad right-

of-way to build a campfire, so the boys arranged to prepare dinner on the electric coils. The "hog's-back," in the face of which the cave showed, extended to the south for a long distance, sloping gradually up until a mile or more away it became mountainous in size. To the east of it was a valley showing signs of fertility. To the west the valley was drained by Lost Horse creek.

While Frank and Jack, doubtful of Jimmie's success in providing a dinner, were broiling ham over the coils, frying potatoes, and making coffee, Ned walked up the railroad right-of-way to the east and looked over the valley, which dipped down in one place below the track. In fact, the steel rails were laid on a ledge facing south, and overlooking this valley, perhaps eighty rods from the place where the boys had camped, a heavy steel structure supported the metals.

"It seems to me," Ned mused, "that there ought to be a creek of good size here somewhere. A lot of water must fall into the valley, and I see no possible way for it to escape."

The boy clambered down from the shelf of rock upon which the road ran and walked for some distance up the valley. In several places he observed indications of the action of water but no channel was in sight.

"I guess," he mused as he turned back to the track, "that Chester was right when he said there was a running stream back of the cave in which we have stored the Scout. When it rains, or when the water comes down from the hills, the moisture finds its way through openings in the rocks into a tunnel which undermines the ridge and so passes on to Lost Horse creek."

This seemed to be the only explanation possible. The valley certainly would require drainage, and there was no drainage in sight. Ned looked for an opening under the steel structure which bridged the break in the ledge, but there was none there. Then he took note that the lowest point of the valley was some distance south of the tracks.

"There is a channel under that ridge somewhere," the boy concluded, "and I may as well get back to camp and look it up."

When he reached the Scout, Jimmie was there preparing a fine mess of fish for the frying pan, and Chester was relating some of the adventures in the west.

"I wonder how our friends, the highwaymen, are getting along about this time?" asked Jack, as the boy referred to the outlaws' attack on the Scout the previous night.

"Why don't you go and find out, Ned?" asked Jimmie.

"It's dollars to apples," Harry cut in, "that the four robbers who got away are watching every message that passes over the wire. If officers are sent out to round them up, they'll know all the plans before the squad leaves division headquarters."

"What's the matter with the wireless?" asked Frank. "We're Boy Scout Electricians, aren't we? What's the good of guessing at things when we can talk through the air?"

"That's a very good idea," Ned interposed, "and after dinner, we'll put up the aerials and see if we can get into communication with that Boy Scout at Miles City."

"Of course you can," laughed Jimmie. "You needn't think that any Boy Scout will keep away from a wireless station when there's train robbers scouring the country looking for plunder."

Shortly after dinner the aerials were carried to the top of the ridge and suspended between two scraggy trees which grew there. Then Ned brought out his suit case and the connections were made. The moment the receiver was applied to Ned's ear, he knew that he was within the zone of some operator who was reaching out in the hope of connecting with another station.

"What do they say, Ned?" asked Jimmie, impatiently.

"Why don't you wait till the boy gets tuned up?" asked Harry.

"Why, he tuned it up the other night," Jimmie grinned.

"Well, he's got to tune it up again," Frank cut in. "Don't you know, kid, that when you go to the theatre you hear the members of the orchestra tuning up their instruments under the stage? They saw, and toot, and scrape, until the people in the three dollar seats are ready to leave the house. Then they open those funny little doors under the stage and get out into their chairs and begin to saw, and scrape, and toot again, just as if they hadn't tuned their blooming old instruments in a hundred years. Well, that's just the way it is with a wireless instrument. You've got to tune it up every time you look at it."

"You're the wise little wireless boy!" laughed Jimmie.

"That's all right," Frank continued, "but I'll tell you that you've got to do a lot of coaxing before you can get the currents of the air to pick up words a thousand miles off and bring them to you."

While the boys were talking Ned was busy at his coherer. Directly he began to understand that the distant operator was trying to call his own station.

"B," "B," the call came. "B," "B."

Ned looked puzzled for a moment.

"Do you get something?" asked Frank.

"It sounds like 'B,' 'B,'" was the reply.

"That's right!" Frank exclaimed. "That means Black Bear. Don't you understand?"

"That's a fact!" Ned answered. "You see, I belong to the Wolf Patrol, and I'd forgotten all about mentioning Black Bear to Miles City the other night."

"What does he say?" asked Jimmie again.

"If you'll wait a minute," Ned answered, "I'll repeat the conversation, just as I give it and get it."

The boys waited impatiently for a moment and then Ned began:

"This is Black Bear."

"Elk, Miles City," was the reply.

"You know about the round-up last night?" Ned asked.

"I haven't heard about anything else all day," was the reply. "The general manager has been sitting on my neck all day, waiting for me to connect with you again."

"Where are the outlaws?" Ned asked.

"In jail," came the reply.

"And the railroad men?"

"Fired!"

There was a brief pause, and then the Boy Scout at Miles City asked:

"Anything new there?"

"Not a thing."

"Way clear for the pay car?" was then asked.

"It seems to be," the boy answered.

"They're going to send a lot of money over to the western division," the Scout at Miles City continued, "and the general manager wants you to report the situation there."

"All quiet here," Ned answered, "so far as I can see, but the four men who escaped are undoubtedly in the vicinity."

"Well, the general manager thinks they won't be able to organize another force for a few days, so he's going to send the money through. He thinks they'll keep out of sight for a week or more, if they don't leave the country entirely."

"All right," Ned said, "I'll leave my aerials up so I can talk with you tonight if there is anything to say."

"What next?" asked Jimmie as Ned lowered the receiver.

"I don't know," Ned answered. "I think the general manager is taking chances in sending a lot of money over the road just at this time. Those four men are ugly and desperate, and they'll make trouble in some way, you may depend upon that."

"But they are only the leaders," urged Frank. "They haven't got the nerve to hold up a train."

"You must remember," Ned went on, "that these men have an electrical system of some kind. One can do a whole lot with electricity, you know."

"If you don't believe it," grinned Jimmie, "you call up the ghost of the bear and ask him."

"Yes," Frank suggested, "the men are desperate, and may set out to wreck a train, even if they don't expect to make anything by it. They might roll boulders down on the track, or they might burn a bridge."

"The bridges are mostly steel," Jack explained.

"That's very true," Ned broke in, "but a steel bridge can be tumbled down almost as easily as a wooden one, if you have an electric current strong enough to cut through the supports."

Chester now called the attention of the boys, who were now seated in the cavern in the narrow space between the walls and the wheels of the motor car, to a low, rumbling sound which seemed to come from the walls themselves and to, in a measure, set the air atremble.

"There!" he said. "That's the sound I

heard when I lay in the sun, choking for a drink of water. Doesn't that sound like a waterfall?"

"It certainly does," Ned answered, "and there is no doubt in my mind but that there is a subterranean channel under this ridge. You can see how the rocks are piled up around this cave. It looks as if the whole ridge had been thrown up by volcanic action, the rocks being tumbled about helter skelter. Nothing else could make exactly that kind of a noise," Ned continued, "so there must be a waterfall in there."

"Suppose we go and look!" suggested Jimmie.

"Oh, wait a little while," Harry urged. "It's most supper time, and we can hear the water tumbling about a good deal plainer in the night, when the air is heavier."

The boys rested and discussed the situation for the remainder of the afternoon. When darkness fell, Ned was nervous and uneasy, thinking of the promised revenge of the outlaws.

"Come on, Jack," he said after a while, "suppose we walk down the track to the east. I have a hunch that this is going to be a busy night for us. I am anxious about that pay car."

Leaving the other boys in the cave discussing the advisability of making a search for the subterranean stream, Ned and Jack walked swiftly away to the east. Before they had proceeded more than a hundred yards, Ned stopped

abruptly and pointed to a strange light shifting about on the face of the precipice facing the valley which Ned had explored during the afternoon.

"There," the boy declared, "is a light which is unquestionably made by electricity, and it is directly over the steel bridge!"

CHAPTER XXII

CLOSE TO ELECTROCUTION

"They could get good and even by burning that bridge down, couldn't they?" Jack suggested.

"That's just what I'm thinking," Ned replied. "With one support burned through, a train would fall fifty feet to the rocky floor of the valley. Hundreds might be killed."

"You were speaking of the outlaws having an electric system here," Jack questioned. "Do you think they have a dynamo powerful enough to furnish a current which would cut through a steel bridge support?"

"They may have," Ned answered.

"But where is this dynamo?" was Jack's question.

"That is one of the things we haven't found out yet," Ned answered.

During this conversation the boys had been passing swiftly and cautiously down the railroad track to the east. When they came to a place from which they could look out over the steel trestle, they saw two figures moving about at the bottom of the valley. Although there was no moon, the sky was remarkably free of

clouds and the stars supplied a fairly good illumination.

The boys turned from the track where a slight cut began and passed down the slope of the valley to the bottom. They were now not more than fifty feet from the two figures which had been observed from above.

"One of those fellows," Jack suggested, "is swinging a search light in a curious manner."

"Unless I am greatly mistaken," Ned whispered, his voice trembling with alarm, "they are burning one of the steel supports of the trestle."

"That's going some for train robbers," Jack whispered back.

"They may be doing it out of a spirit of revenge," Ned went on, "or they may be doing it because they expect to dump the paycar into this valley. After a fall from the track above, the trainmen and guards would be in no condition to defend the specie."

"Then that's what they're doing it for," Jack declared. "They have been boasting all along that they would capture the pay car in spite of us."

"They've got their nerve to try it right under our noses," Ned answered. "I wonder what action we ought to take. I think we ought to shoot them down in their tracks. Anyway, I feel just like it."

"Any man who will wreck a train ought not to be given a trial," Jack suggested.

The boys drew their revolvers and directed them toward the men who were using the most modern method of cutting through steel.

"I can't do it!" Ned said in a moment. "I can't shoot a man in the back."

"I can't either," Jack answered. "I wish we could find a way to get hold of them."

"That's a very good idea, boy!" came a voice from the rear, a voice that both boys knew, and the next instant they were drawn back to the ground and held there with a force which was almost rib-breaking.

"You're the cunning little sleuths," Hughes went on. "We had an idea that you'd be nosing around here tonight, and so we got ready for you. You've been followed ever since you left the camp."

"You're the cunning old Desperate Desmond, all right!" Jack exclaimed.

"What's the idea now?" Ned asked, as Hughes deftly removed his automatic and search light.

"Put yourself in our place for a moment," Hughes answered, "and then tell me what you think we ought to do."

"You ought to turn us loose and go to work for an honest living," Jack blurted out.

"One precinct heard from!" laughed Hughes. "What do you think about it, Nestor?" he added.

"I move to make it unanimous!" the boy answered.

"Well," Hughes went on, "to turn you boys loose, to allow the ones now at the cave to escape, would be the same as setting ourselves into electric chairs and telling the officers to turn the switch. With you boys alive, there would be no hiding place for us on the face of the earth. Now you understand what we've got to do."

"I understand what you hope to do," Ned replied.

"Besides," Hughes went on, "you murdered Stearns and Tom last night, and you ought to receive the same treatment you gave them."

"They were warned over and over again!" Ned exclaimed. "I told them to keep away from the wires, but they wouldn't do it."

"That was a clever device of yours," Hughes went on. "I wouldn't have believed you capable of it. What did you learn by wireless this afternoon?" he continued.

"You know about that, too, do you?" asked Ned.

"You haven't done a thing this afternoon that we don't know about," Hughes laughed.

"You can't run a touring car through this country without making a noise, and you can't make a noise without directing others to your whereabouts. I can tell you right now how many fish that little newsboy caught for dinner."

"We must have been about half asleep," Jack put in. "When a boy can be followed by men who make the blunders you make without discovering what's going on, there must be something the matter with him."

"All this doesn't answer the question," Hughes broke in angrily. "I asked what you discovered by wireless."

"Nothing of importance," Ned replied.

"Then we bested you by the old simple wire tapping game," Hughes continued.

"Yes," Slosson added, "we had quite a confidential little chat with the train despatcher at Miles City this afternoon."

"He must be a dub not to know that ham fist of yours," Jack cut in.

"Oh, he thought that was Nestor," grinned Hughes. "Now boys," the outlaw went on in a moment, "I don't like to put you to personal inconvenience, but, really, I'm afraid I'll have to burn the shoes off your feet with a live wire if you don't tell me what you learned by wireless."

The situation was growing more serious every moment, for the outlaws were evidently becom-

ing impatient as well as revengeful. Ned had not the least doubt in the world that the suggested torture would be resorted to if Hughes believed it necessary for his own sake to do so.

He thought fast for a few moments, reviewing in his mind all the plans of escape which came to him and rejecting them one by one.

"Tell me what you learned through your relay this afternoon and I'll tell you if I learned anything additional," Ned finally compromised.

"We learned that the pay car with specie for the western division will reach this trestle about ten o'clock," replied Hughes. "We also learned," he went on, "that the railway people, probably on the theory that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, do not expect any more trouble from us at this point."

"Your information covers the ground," Ned declared.

"Is that honest?" asked Hughes.

"What's the good of asking him a question like that?" demanded Slosson. "He's the champion little liar, and you know it as well as I do."

"Yes," Ned answered, paying no attention to the insulting epithet. "That is the exact truth. The railway people believe you have left this section of the country, so they are sending their specie car through tonight."

"Heavily guarded, I suppose?" questioned Hughes.

"Nothing was said about that," Ned answered. "I should judge not, though," he went on, "because the general manager believes that you will never be seen in this district again."

"We won't be seen around here after tonight," chuckled Slosson. "In just a little while there'll be a nice little mess of twisted iron and twisted bones in the valley under that trestle. Then we'll serve the big safe just as we're serving the steel support, and before you can count ten we'll be away with a ton or more of gold and silver."

"You'll carry it in your watch pocket, I suppose!" Jack said, scornfully.

"The wonderful little boy thinks of almost everything, doesn't he?" Hughes sneered, giving Jack a not very tender push with his shoe. "In order not to disappoint the railroad company," he went on, "we've taken the track motor and boxed it. It will tote away at thirty miles an hour all the coin the pay car brings here."

Ned was thinking fast. In less than two hours the pay car would be on the trestle unless stopped before that time. Over and over again, he concentrated his mind on the problem of rescue. How could he reach the boys at the

camp? How could he warn the men on the threatened train?

"Impossible!" he mused in a moment. "Only an act of Providence can save our lives, and the lives of those on the special."

It did seem at that moment as if the boy had exactly expressed the situation. There was no possible way of asking help from the camp or of warning the men on board the onrushing train.

During all this conversation the work at the supports of the trestle had been delayed because of some trouble with the connection. Hughes had glanced impatiently toward his fellow conspirator several times, but now he hastened away toward the scene of their operations.

"Hold a gun on these boys," he directed as he turned away.

"I'll shoot if one of them moves six inches!" answered Slosson.

Hughes was seen to join the two men at the bottom of the valley, and than a flashlight lit up the scene of destruction.

"There's always something wrong with that wire!" grumbled Slosson. "Rowell and Benson are posing as first-class electricians, but I don't believe they know any more about electricity than I do."

"What's the trouble with the wire?" asked

Ned, hoping that the defect was serious enough to prevent the renewal of the work.

"If I knew," growled Slosson, "I'd go and fix it."

"Turn me loose and I'll go and fix it," proffered Jack with a grin on his white face.

Slosson struck savagely at the boy with a clenched fist, but the boy managed to elude the blow.

"I presume," grumbled Slosson, seeming to take delight in airing his troubles, "that they'll keep fooling with that wire until the pay car passes, and we'll land back in Chicago with about money enough to buy a free lunch."

"Chicago is a bad place to be broke in!" Jack snickered.

With an oath the outlaw drew half a dozen strong leather strings from his pocket and threw them down on the ground.

"This delay will continue," he snarled, "until I get down there and help straighten things out, so I've just naturally got to tie you boys up and leave you here."

So deft was the robber in his operations that the boys' feet and hands were tied with the leather strings almost before they could realize what was going on. Ordinarily they would have looked for an opportunity for flight while

the hands of the outlaw, instead of holding a gun, were occupied with the strings.

"You seem to be the champion tier," Jack said, drawing hard on the cords at his wrist in order to relieve the strain.

"I don't intend that you shall get away!" Slosson ejaculated. "You can't roll up the hill, and if you roll down, you'll only come nearer to the men at work below."

Left alone, the boys compared notes as to the situation. Both were positive that some means of escape would be provided, but they had not the slightest notion as to how the assistance was to come.

"We'll get out all right!" Ned said cheerfully, "but I'm afraid we can't stop the train in time to prevent the loss of many lives."

In a short time Slosson came stumbling up the little acclivity leading to the spot where the boys had been captured. Without speaking a word he cut the thongs at the boys' ankles and jerked them roughly to their feet.

"We want you down at the works!" he said with a snarl.

"You can't employ me on any 'scab' job," Jack said provokingly. "I've got a union card."

Without making any reply Slosson hurried the boys along until the steel trestle was reached.

Ned saw that one of the main supports had been partly burned through, and that the current was for some unknown reason proving insufficient to continue the work of destruction. It seemed to him that as yet the damage was not yet great enough to cause the fall of the trestle.

"Now," Hughes said as Ned came up, "there's something wrong with the apparatus we're using to cut the steel. The current seems to be all right, what there is of it, but it doesn't produce the white heat necessary for this work."

"Why don't your electricians fix it?" asked Ned.

"They can't fix it!" snarled Hughes angrily. "They don't know how. We're going to ask you to fix it for us. There's something wrong with the connection. We want you to fix that, and then direct the carbon against the support. You've been so mighty fresh lately that we're going to let you wreck this train."

While Ned hesitated both boys realized that wire was being wound around their legs.

"If you refuse," Slosson shouted, "you'll die where you stand! My fingers are already itching on the switch.

CHAPTER XXIII

JIMMIE TAKES A DROP

When Ned and Jack disappeared down the railroad right-of-way to the east, Frank, Jimmie and Harry began an animated discussion concerning the possibility of there being a running stream in the ridge back of the cave where the Scout lay.

"I know there's one there, all right!" insisted Chester. "When I lay in the ditch that day, it sounded as loud as Niagara, and there was another sound with it—a whirring, buzzing sound that made me think of machinery in motion."

"Ned thinks there is an underground stream," Frank suggested, "and I move that we go find it while he is away."

"We ought to have daylight for that," Harry replied.

"Daylight, nothing!" Jimmie shouted. "I've been all along on top of this ridge for a hundred rods, and there's no opening of any kind leading down into the rocks. When you get up there, too, there is no indication of running water. If you leave it to me, the entrance to the passage where the water is running is from this cave."

Frank sprang to his feet and dashed to the back of the cavern where he stood listening with an ear to the wall.

"Can you hear it?" asked Jimmie.

"Sure, I can!" answered Frank. "This wall trembles."

The boys brought out their searchlights and began a thorough examination of the wall at the back of their retreat, and also of the smooth rock floor. For a long time nothing was discovered, but presently, in a corner, Harry came upon fragments of rock which looked as if they had been recently chipped away from a larger stone.

"There's a passage leading from this cave, all right!" Jimmie exclaimed, when the fragments were shown to him.

"Yes, and here it is!" shouted Frank as a small section of the floor gave way under their feet and dropped him down several inches.

The boy instantly hopped out of the depression and the boys gathered around it.

"You see how it is," Frank explained, "there was a natural opening between this cave and a cavern or passage farther to the south. This has been blocked up, and I happened to step on one of the stones laid to conceal it."

The settling of the stone revealed breaks and crevices in the floor, and also in the lower part

of the wall, which the boys lost no time in investigating. The result was that in less than half an hour, a pile of rocks showed on the floor of the cave and the mouth of a tunnel leading they knew not whither lay open at the back wall.

From the passage thus opened the roaring of water dropping over a precipice could be heard. As the boys listened, they detected another note which sounded like the steady whir of machinery.

"That's what I told you!" Chester exclaimed when the second disturbance of the air was referred to. "I told you that there was another sound."

"What do you suppose it is?" asked Harry.

"The way to find out," Jimmie put in, "is to investigate this tunnel."

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, the boy switched on his flash light and disappeared in the opening. Frank and Harry were at his heels in a moment, and the three went crawling down an incline of about thirty degrees on their hands and knees.

Fifty feet or more from the opening they came to a chamber much larger than the cave in which they had stored the motor car. The flashlights showed a swift current lashing against broken boulders. A few paces below, the stream dis-

appeared entirely, falling over a precipice with a sound which, in that confined space, reminded one of thunder.

Along the edge of the stream ran a narrow ledge, the surface of which was a yard or more above the level of the stream.

Frank lowered his light and studied the ledge thoroughly.

"We're not the first people to pass along here!" he said. "I can't see any footprints on the rock, of course, but I can see ends of wire and bits of rubber strewn along."

"Do you think we camped right at the mouth of the robbers' den?" Harry asked.

"It looks like it," Frank answered, "although there must be another opening to this chamber."

"Say!" Jimmie shouted, speaking in Frank's ear in order that his words might be understood above the roar of the water, "they've set the stream at work down there and they've forgotten their oil can. Don't you hear the machinery creaking?"

From the depths of the stream somewhere below its plunge into unknown regions came the sharp, insistent creaking of an improperly cared for shaft. It sounded to the boys like the nerve-torturing screeches heard from the primitive horse cars in New York.

Frank sat down flat upon the ledge and turned

his flashlight toward the point where the stream disappeared.

"We've got it!" he cried, "we've got it! If anybody should ask you, there's the hidden dynamo right down there, under that current!"

"This is funny!" chuckled Harry. "We've been hunting all over the country for the source of their electricity, and now we go and make a camp within a dozen feet of it!"

"I guess Ned'll be glad of this!" Jimmie cried.

"We'll have to tie him up to keep him inside of his skin," Harry ventured.

The boys followed the ledge to the wall under which the current dropped. They turned their searchlights in every direction, but could discover no possible way in which to gain the lower level where the water wheel, they believed to exist, must be in operation.

"There's an outside entrance to this business!" Jimmie declared. "We can't get to the dynamo or whatever it is that's making that noise by way of this passage."

"Well," Frank suggested, "suppose we got out to Lost Horse creek and follow up the tributary which enters it somewhere near the old camp. It's a pretty sure thing that the stream here is the same one which enters the creek at the surface over there."

"But we ought to find it tonight!" insisted Harry.

"Find what?" asked Frank.

"Find the dynamo!" answered the boy.

"Why tonight?" questioned the other.

"Because," Harry said, "they may be working some deviltry with it."

"That's all right, too!" Jimmie cut in. "We ought to find that dynamo tonight."

"What we hear may not be a dynamo at all," suggested Frank.

"Anyway," Jimmie went on, "I'm going out in there to see how deep that water is. If it isn't too deep, I can drop down to the boulder above where the water disappears, and get a peek into the chute it follows. I might be able to see if there really is anything except a waterfall below."

"I wouldn't take a chance in that current for a thousand dollars!" declared Harry. "You might be swept into the chute."

"Well, then, get a rope!" Jimmie cried. "If you think I don't know enough to make my way to that boulder and hang onto it while I look down, get a rope and tie it around my waist. Then if anything happens you can hold me back."

This plan gained the consent of the boys, and in a short time Jimmie dropped off the ledge and

started to swim toward the boulder at the head of the drop. To his amazement, however, he found the water was only up to his waist, so he waded along quite comfortably, although the current was very strong.

Once or twice he slipped on the treacherous bottom and plunged head first into the water, but the rope always assisted him to his feet, and he went on until he came to the boulder which split the stream at the point of its disappearance. Perching himself upon the rock, he called out to Frank:

"Throw me a torchlight. I lost mine in one of the tumbles!"

"Be sure and catch it then!" Frank answered.

Jimmie caught the electric without difficulty and at once turned its lance of flame down the passage through which the water was pouring. After a couple of minutes spent in investigation, he called back:

"There's a water-wheel down there, all right, and the water-wheel runs the dynamo."

"Is the dynamo running?" asked Frank.

"You bet it is!"

"Anything else there?" asked Harry.

"Wait a minute," Jimmie answered, "until I get a better view!"

As the boy spoke he clambered upon the top of the slippery rock, swayed for an instant, and

pitched headlong down the chute! The boys holding the rope had drawn nearer to him in order to hear what he was saying, and so the slack of the line in no wise retarded the boy's plunge through the passage.

In a moment the line tightened in Frank's hand and a quick jerk told him that the boy was still alive.

"I guess we're up against it now!" Harry cried in dismay. "We'll never see Jimmie again!"

"Don't you never think we won't!" replied Frank. "Just listen a moment. Do you hear any rattle down there now? Do you know what that means? Well, its my opinion that Jimmie landed right side up and that he has reached the dynamo."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HIDDEN DYNAMO

Held fast by wires which might be charged with a death dealing current at any instant, Ned considered the situation very gravely indeed. He was positive that Slosson, who seemed to him to be a brute by nature, would turn the switch which would electrocute them both unless he did—or pretended to do—as requested.

He decided, therefore, to seem to fall in with their plans. Such a course would at least preserve their lives for a short time and many things, he knew, might happen in a few minutes.

"Very well," he said presently. "I'll see what I can do with the machine."

Slosson removed his hand from the switch and uncoiled the wires which were wound, snake-like, around Ned's legs.

"I'll give you five minutes to get the carbon at work on that steel," he declared.

Ned saw at once that one of the binding screws had become loosened, and that the current was arcing. He knew that the defect might be repaired, with proper caution, but he was in no hurry to inform the outlaws of the situation.

Shaking the wire violently, he made a temporary connection and produced a small flame at the end of the carbon set against the steel support. He knew that the heat thus engendered was not sufficient to affect the steel to any degree whatever. He also understood that as long as he kept his position at the wire no harm could come to the structure.

While he sat there on the ground, surrounded by wires conveying electricity enough to destroy a hundred lives, he listened intently, hopefully, for the rumble of the approaching train. It seemed to him that the train ought to be due at that time.

"Come, hurry up there!" Slosson shouted. "Saw through that steel. The train will be along directly!"

"I'm doing the best I can," answered Ned. "The trouble is with the connection, and, if you want the job done right, you'd better go and turn off the power."

The men whispered together for a few moments, and then Benson and Rowell started away to the west. Hughes and Slosson remained by Ned's side, watching every movement he made.

In the meantime Jack, left to his own devices, was industriously sawing the leather thong which held his wrists upon the sharp edge of a

broken stone. Directly the almost imperceptible ringing of the steel structure told of the distant approach of a railway train.

"There you are!" Hughes cried. "There you are! Throw on the fire, boy. We'll only have to weaken the support a little more to bring the whole trestle down."

"Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" repeated Slosson. "We must get that cut through and get out of the way before the train gets here."

By shaking the wires violently, Ned managed to secure enough current in the carbon to produce the desired flame. He knew that the trestle was no longer in danger, knew that the train would pass in safety, but he was wondering how these two men were to be captured and brought to punishment.

He did not know, of course, that Jack, already free of his bonds, was creeping stealthily toward the coats of the two outlaws. In the excitement of the night, the garments, in the pockets of which reposed their automatic revolvers, had been cast carelessly aside.

"I see how it is!" Slosson exclaimed in a moment. "You are not trying to burn that support! Here, give me that wire!"

He seized the feed wire in his two hands, protected by rubber gloves, and, with an oath, laid the small space of non-insulated wire next

the carbon directly across Ned's bare neck. A cry of horror sprang involuntarily from Jack's lips, and even Hughes dashed forward in the hope of averting the murder of the boy.

Ned dropped to the ground and lay silent and motionless for a moment. Believing his chum to be dead, Jack, who had lost no time in securing possession of the automatic revolvers, fired two shots pointblank at Hughes and Slosson. Slosson crumpled up and fell instantly, while Hughes turned about with a snarl on his lips and faced Jack.

The man had no weapon within reach, or the boy's life would have ended there. Not knowing how soon the powerful man might be able to regain a weapon, Jack leaped forward and struck him a heavy blow with the butt of the automatic. Hughes fell to the ground like a log.

Paying no further attention to the two fallen men, except to keep a revolver pointed in their direction, Jack bent over his chum. To his amazement, he saw that Ned's eyes were open, and that he was slowly getting to his feet.

"What happened?" Ned asked.

"I should think you'd ask what happened!" Jack replied. "You got about a hundred volts of electricity. That's what happened!"

"I got just enough to make my toes tingle," Ned answered.

He sat up and examined the non-insulated wire. He shook it violently as before, in order to make the connection where the binding screw was not doing its duty, and then laid an unprotected finger on the joint.

"You see," he said, "the current has been shut off."

"I wonder how that happened!" Jack queried.

At this moment the rumble of the approaching train showed that it was not very far away. Seizing a torchlight where it had been cast on the ground by Hughes, the boy ran at full speed up the slope leading down from the eastern end of the trestle.

"What are you going to do up there?" Jack called out after him.

Ned made no reply, but the next moment his chum saw him waving a red light directly in the path of the oncoming train.

The boy had drawn a red silk handkerchief over the rounded eye of the searchlight.

The train whistled shrilly, impatiently, angrily, but the grinding of the brakes showed that the engineer was slowing down. Before many minutes the engineer, the conductor, and half a dozen armed guards were gathered about the boy. Ned told the story of the night tersely,

excitedly. At the conclusion of his recital, the guards hastened into the dip at the foot of the trestle and lifted the two prostrate men aboard the train.

"They're not hurt much," said one of the men, as the two were placed in the baggage car. "One has a bad bump on the coco and the other has a crease along the side of the head which knocked him out without doing much damage."

"There are two more of the gang here," Ned said, "and I think I know how to bring them up to the train. If you'll back up a little," he said to the engineer, "the fellows will think the trestle is down and come running. At least that's my idea of it."

The train was backed a trifle, but Benson and Rowell did not come running as Ned had anticipated. In order to know why they did not it is only necessary to return to the underground dynamo which had been discovered by Jimmie and his chums. In falling through the chute Jimmie had caught an upright beam upon which a portion of the frame of the water wheel was screwed. From this he had lowered himself to a ledge similiar to the one in the upper cavern.

Fortunately, his flashlight had not been destroyed during his passage through the chute and its light now showed the boy an opening to the

west through which the river ran swiftly in the direction of Lost Horse creek.

At the head of the opening an iron clamp had been fastened into the wall at the apex of the arch, and to this was attached a strong pulley. Over this pulley ran a rope, and the boy saw that one end of the rope was attached to a small boat swinging in the current.

"That's the robbers' highway!" he exclaimed. "That's how they get in and out of this place to tend the dynamo."

Scarcely were the words out of the boy's mouth when their accuracy was demonstrated by the immediate disappearance of the boat. Jimmie saw the rope moving on the pulley as the craft disappeared down stream. While he watched, wild-eyed, the line began moving again and in a very short time, the nose of the boat was again visible under Jimmie's searchlight.

Almost before the boy could grasp the situation, two men leaped from the boat, wading for a few paces in the water, and sprang to the ledge. The next thing he heard was a pistol shot. Almost involuntarily, he returned the fire.

Then a strange thing happened! There came a clatter of writhing wire, followed by the shrieks of human beings in agony. Then all was dark and still.

Almost involuntarily Jimmie switched on his searchlight and threw its rays down the ledge. The two men who had entered in the boat lay there motionless, their white faces turned up to the roof. The dynamo was still whirling and his first act was to shut it off.

Jimmie next bent over the two men to see whether they were alive or dead. He understood that the bullet he had fired had cut the high-tension wire, and that it had dropped down upon the shoulders of the two men.

To this day the boy cannot accurately recall the events which followed. He remembers tying both men securely with pieces of fish line which he found in his pocket, of entering the boat and lowering himself by means of the rope and pulley until he came to the light of the stars.

He also remembers dropping almost breathless into the outer cavern where the motor car lay and calling to Frank and Harry, who were still on the ledge of the inner chamber. He remembers seeing Frank go racing up the railroad track like a madman, racing toward the headlight of a locomotive which seemed to be slowly advancing.

At last, when the train stopped and the boy found himself surrounded by armed guards and knew that Hughes and Slosson had been wounded and captured, and that Benson and

Rowell had been brought from the vicinity of the dynamo and placed on board the train, he approached Ned with one of his old-time grins.

"I get the bundle!" he said. "I've found the hidden dynamo."

"You'll all get a bundle, I guess," the man in charge of the guards said. "You've captured four men for whose arrest rewards to the amount of over twenty thousand dollars are offered. Also," he continued, "you saved the railroad the trouble of rebuilding that trestle."

"In that case," Jack remarked, "I think we'd better load the Scout into one of those cars and drop the curtain on the whole scene. I love excitement, but this has been a little to strenuous for me."

"There are enough of us here to get the car on board," the conductor said to Ned, "if you really want to go out now."

"I guess we'd better go," said Ned, "I feel like sleeping the clock around six times."

When the special bearing the specie, the motor car, the Boy Scout Electricians, and the prisoners steamed into Seattle, there was a great crowd assembled to get a look at the boys who had occupied such prominent positions in the newspapers for two days. When at last the boys escaped they stored the machine in a nearby garage and disappeared in a suite of

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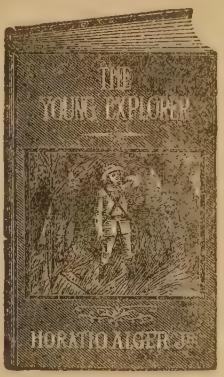

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